A Medieval Hun

John J. Carleton

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A Medieval Hun

A Five Act Historical Drama

By

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Canadian Prize Play Competition, 1918

"The fisherman of Galilee had triumphed over the conqueror of Pharsalia. The vassal of Otto had reduced Otto's successor to vassalage.

SIR JAMES STEPHEN, K. C. B.

THE CORNHILL COMPANY
BOSTON

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CHARACTERS

Henry IV, King of Germany and Emperor of Rome.
Guibert of Ravenna, antipope Clement III.
Hubert, Archbishop of Bavaria.
Otto, Baron of Nordheim.
Raimond, his son.
Harold, court jester.
Godfrey, Count of Sudermann.
Hermann, Archduke of Bremen.
Felix Cosmos, self-described.
Conrad, Margrave of Erichstedt.
Anselm, Abbot of Limwenlock.
Zither, of the King's Guard.
Anhalt, henchman of Hermann.
Cardinal Dolmino, a papal secretary.
Chevalier Leopine, a papal courier.
Pope Gregory VII, the Hildebrand.
Bertha, Queen and Empress.
Mildred, Princess of Bavaria.
Clodel, a courtezan.
Mary, a lady-in-waiting.

Male and female retainers, courtiers, bishops, priests, monks, soldiers, buglers, standard bearers, pages, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PLACE: GERMANY AND ITALY — TIME: 1075–77

ACT I

KING'S PALACE AT GOSLAR — Love and Divorce

ACT II

ABBEY OF LIMWENLOCK — Death to Hildebrand

ACT III

ROOM IN THE VATICAN — The Hildebrand

ACT IV

EMPEROR'S PAVILION ON THE CAMPANIA — Farewell to Greatness

ACT V

CHATEAU OF CANOSSA — All Is Well

A MEDIEVAL HUN

FOREWORD

On April 22, 1073, the spontaneous and universal acclaim of a Roman populace raised the Archdeacon-Cardinal (sometime Monk) Hildebrand to the Papal throne. He assumed the title of Gregory VII.

On January 28, 1077, took place an event without precedent and without repetition: Henry IV, the successor of Charlemagne, King of Germany and titular Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, in penitential habiliment and with compunct profession, at the chateau or castle of Conossa, made unreserved surrender of temporal power to spiritual supremacy, was absolved from the penalties attached to his delinquencies and permitted, subject to good behavior, to resume his regal functions.

The intervening months, inclusive of the given dates, witnessed a human drama of world-wide import and lasting effect; a colossal epic of such intense power and thrilling interest as has never been surpassed, nor perhaps equalled, by the emanations of exuberant fancy. It was a brilliant and glowing mass of color — extravagant comedy and turgid tragedy — in a theatre of majestic pageantry and splendor.

For this play that has been chosen as the time of action. The main incidents of the period, having regard to unities, have been freely used — more properly, adopted, adapted and paraphrased. The story — plot and development — is altogether fiction. So also are most of the characters — puppets of the imagination — hence, it is thought well to leave the conception and visualizing of them largely to the whim of the readr.e

Five of them, however, are figures that have passed

across the stage of historical activity and have left extant records of their doings. Of such, a few preparatory words — a key to their respective individualities — would seem to commend itself.

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The mental and moral make-up of King Henry was contradictory: much that was likeable was offset by that which was detestable. His most ardent champions are, perforce of fact, apologetic; his most censorious critics freely accede him gifts and distinctive qualities that might have won for him a lasting enviable fame: his name passed on to time as the Augustus and not, as it has, the Nero of the Middle Ages. Despite the abuses and irregularities of his life, he was popular with nobles and people alike; to a great extent their idol. In person he was handsome and his manner, when he wished it, charming; he was a daring and skillful leader, a sagacious adviser, a wary diplomat and fairly cultured. "A Teuton, with large limbs, blue eyes, flaxen hair" . . . "deep in counsel and remarkable sagacity."

In 1075 he was in his twenty-fifth year.

His treatment of his consort, making every allowance for a marriage of royal convenience, was unjustifiable; despicable without extenuation, as evidenced by his attempt to have her seduced by a confidential friend that he might prefer charges of infidelity against her.

No one has ever claimed sincerity for his avowals of sorrow and repentance at Conossa. Some charge downright, premeditated, flagrant hypocrisy. That he was moved by attrition rather than contrition, is the best that can be said of it. He was remorseful for acts that had lost him patrimony, crown and dignity; he

wanted them back and for their recovery was prepared to submit to degradation and undergo any humiliation. It is more than probable that he was incredulous of church anathemas, still had a confused, superstitious dread of an indefinite Superior Being who might in umbrage thwart his effort. Such is the view here adopted.

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More than one historian refers to the Empress Bertha as amiable. The word seems aptly descriptive. The daughter of an Italian margrave, she had youth and beauty but not the dash that fascinates men of Henry's temperament. She was extremely pious and it helped further to estrange her from a husband whose inclinations ran wholly in an opposite direction — a kind of silent rebuke to conscious vice. But her attachment to him was real and lasting. "Amidst the otherwise universal desertion," wrote Sir James Stephen, "there remained one faithful bosom on which to repose his own aching heart. Bertha, his wife, who had retained her purity unsullied amidst the license of his court, now retained her fidelity unshaken amidst the falsehood of his adherents. Her wrongs had been such as to render a deep resentment nothing less than a duty. Her happiness and her home had been basely assailed by the selfish profligate to whom the most solemn vows had in vain united her. But to her, those vows were a bond stronger than death, and indissoluble by all the confederate powers of earth and hell."

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The seeker for material on which to base an estimate of the character of Pope Gregory meets with the zenith and nadir of opinion — an irreconcilable conflict. Per-

sonal predilections unconsciously sway; and Gregory, the prolific subject of partizan zeal, is too often interpreted by the color of the glasses through which he is seen: favorable or unfavorable to the system he represented. Even Sir James Stephen's palpable effort at impartiality discloses inconsistencies, attributable, no doubt, to his own convictions being out of joint with those of "the greatest of ecclesiastical statesmen," as von Ranke styles Gregory. Nevertheless, Stephen's tribute to the genius that raised itself to its high vocation, and the debt succeeding generations owe to the triumph of mental over physical power, of literature over ignorance, of religion over debauchery, is not wanting — is even prodigal — in sincere admiration.

"His was that rarest and grandest of gifts," says Sir James Bryce; "an intellectual courage and power of imaginative belief which, when it has convinced itself of aught, accepts it fully with all its consequences and shrinks not from acting at once upon it."

"If I were not Napoleon I would wish to be Gregory VII," was the alternative preference of a self-confessed egotist.

Whether Gregory was a scheming, insolent, bigoted churchman — "the incarnation of ecclesiastical despotism" — a paltry politician creating conditions favorable to personal advancement and power; or, whether he was the conscientious and lion-hearted reformer of the abuses of a corrupt age and the greatest vindicator of human freedom the world has ever had, are questions that pertain to the province of the historian, not the dramatist.

As Gregory is here introduced, he would be anywhere from 54 to 64 years of age — a doubt exists as to the exact date of his birth. In person, he was small, slight, gray-haired, full bearded and feeble. "The most Petrine

of all the popes bore a striking resemblance to St. Paul," is the near-epigram of a present-day writer. His piercing eyes were his most striking physical feature: "from the terrible glance of whose countenance the eye of every beholder recoiled as from the lightning."

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Guibert, Archbishop of Ravenna and, by Henry's nomination, Pope (antipope) Clement III, was in every respect the very antithesis of his great protagonist. He was a patrician, closely allied to royalty. He owed the confirmation of his archiepiscopal dignity to the good offices of the Archdeacon Hildebrand. It is questionable whether his antagonism to the Pope was prompted by personal animosity or opposition to drastic reforms that did not meet his approval or coincide with his propensities. In him Henry found a ready and pliant tool. It is fairly certain that he was the instigator of the Christmas eve outrage, when Cenci of the House of Tusculum invaded the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore, tore the pontificating Gregory from the altar, stripped him of vestments, wounded and made him prisoner.

The ambitious Guibert was the product of a simple, servile and ruthless age; when princes moved in an orbit of official sanctity; when might was right; when the disciples of Simon Magus held the temple and the noisy acclaim of Diana of the Ephesians drowned low-voiced hosannas to the Son of David.

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The age presents no finer type of layman than Baron Otto of Nordheim. Amid the surrounding sordidness his figure stands out picturesquely, refreshingly wholesome and aureoled in romance. Modest in victory,

heroic in defeat, wise, daring and gifted with an eloquence of speech which, according to an American reviewer, "perhaps equals any effort of our own Patrick Henry."

This extract from one of his addresses may be some index to his personality:

"Perhaps you hesitate to break the oath you have taken to the king, because you are Christians! What! To the king! So long as he was king for me — so long as he showed himself such, I have scrupulously observed the oath I had taken; since he ceased to act like a king, I owe him fealty no longer. Courage then! We do not march against the king. No, but against the enemy of our liberty; against the enemy of our country!"

JOHN L. CARLETON.

"Cahirciveen"
Woodstock, N. B., Canada.
May 25, 1920

ACT I

A MEDIEVAL HUN

ACT I

WHITE MARBLE ROOM IN THE KING'S PALACE AT GOSLAR. A rotundo interior, full stage. At back, following curve of setting, a gallery, about two feet high and three feet wide, surmounted by a balustrade; steps lead up to it on both sides. Main arched entrances R. and L. at foot of the steps. At C., back, an alcove or bow-window backed by garden perspective. Doors R. C., L. C., R. and L. I.

FURNITURE: Statuary, armor, a stone table down R. C. and a stone seat L. C.

DISCOVERED: Raimond and Mildred standing in an affectionate attitude looking out of window at back; Harold lying in front of stone seat.

HAROLD

(*Addressing his harlequin's wand*) Methinks, my Merry-Andrew, the nose detects a change; the drought has lasted o'er long and peace is o'er ripe.

MILDRED

(*As she comes down C. arm-in-arm with Raimond*) Why the muteness — drawn blinds to keep out the sun?

RAIMOND

I am happy — so happy!

MILDRED

And must cheerfulness, perforce, become a recluse? Taciturnity is as nasty as the word.

RAIMOND

The topmost peak of ecstacy and the nethermost depth of despair are poles at which speech congeals and silence alone is eloquent.

MILDRED

(*Buoyantly*) Our happiness is a divine intoxication! Give it utterance, for it is the hour of exhileration's attainment.

RAIMOND

(*Smilingly*) And exultation's oppressiveness.

HAROLD

(*As before*) Bell and blossoms, cake and the cast of cast-off sandals!

RAIMOND

I envy no living mortal. To you I owe it all. Is there more to say?

MILDRED

I partake of it, therefore would hear of it. (*Sobering*) But the court — what of it when it learns that a maid has dared to choose for herself?

RAIMOND

There is naught to fear. My father comes today; he

will be our mediator; a sufficient guarantee that all will be well.

MILDRED

(*Seriously*) I wish I were more worthy. I am afraid. This delight — half-love, half-fear! The sweet calm of a sunny present is so often the forerunner of angry elements. If they should break upon and destroy, even confuse, our joyous madness?

RAIMOND

A *feu de joie*, my dear, announcing another daughter and potential mother in Nordheim.

MILDRED

Heaven send that I — there (*laughs*) I must not give way. . . . (*Soberly*) Truly, I am timorous.

RAIMOND

It is but the impost the Unknown levies on Perfect Bliss; the smiles of the future revenge it.

HAROLD

(*Rising and ringing bells on wand*) The Future is a wanton wedded to the Unknown. Despite the taint of many amours — perhaps, by reason of it — she begets; and the progeny, prolific and poisonous, is Apprehension.

RAIMOND

A stranger!

MILDRED

The jester.

HAROLD

A fool who reaps honors and emoluments from the prodigality of fools.

MILDRED

Pretty conceit! But Harold, since you have heard, pray tell no tales.

HAROLD

Would you have my reputation for wisdom confounded?

RAIMOND

Short memories, you know, good jester —

HAROLD

Would leave me without an occupation.

MILDRED

(*Places hand coaxingly on his shoulder*) But for me —

HAROLD

Tut, tut, I am incorruptible. Even bribes as precious as the smiles of the most beautiful eyes at Goslar —

MILDRED

Flatterer!

RAIMOND

We are at your mercy.

HAROLD

My humor, you mean?

MILDRED

Harken, Harold —

HAROLD

Address your petitions to my little Andrew. He has a heart without a body to compass it.

MILDRED

Then, we are safe in his gleeful discretion. (*Links Raimond's arm; they exit L.*)

HAROLD

Youth, Andrew! Glorious youth with undefiled palate and unimpaired stomach for the sweets of life!

Enter GUIBERT, *R., followed by* GODFREY, CONRAD *and* COURTIERS.

GUIBERT

Another suicide?

GODFREY

You have not been misinformed.

GUIBERT

Three within a fortnight! Scandalous!

CONRAD

Felix Cosmos calls it the gate of adventure opened by the hand of rashness.

Enter FELIX, *R. C., he is young, debonair and self-reliant. Comes slowly down stage.*

GUIBERT

Who is this Cosmos?

GODFREY

Not easy to tell. None here really know. His credentials, it would appear, were unimpeachable. It is suspected he is in the service of the Papal Court. It would explain Hildebrand's certain knowledge of all we do.

GUIBERT

And the king tolerates? We must discover.

FELIX

Why let insignificance trespass on your consideration? You know almost as much about him as he does himself. Antecedents — mystery and desertion. If, like him of the bulrushes, he never had the favor of the daughter of Pharaoh, at least, like the olden prophet, he kens not whom to blame for ushering him into this unkempt, stupid world.

GUIBERT

(*Disdainfully*) Foundling!

FELIX

Some monks who discovered me —

GODFREY

(*Superciliously*) Illegitimate!

FELIX

(*Shrugs his shoulders*) Better a brat than a braggart. In the first there is no choice. . . .

HAROLD

Prick your ears, Andrew!

FELIX

Who knows but that the unfortunate who begot me wore the coronet of — well, say Sudermann? (*Godfrey grasps his sword hilt*) Nay, do not draw. I retract —

GODFREY

It's well!

FELIX

There is no Sudermann blood in me —

OMNES

(*Derisively*) Ah!

FELIX

— thank God! (*General consternation*)

HAROLD

No novice plies that rapier tongue!

FELIX

Apologies for the digression. The hospitable monks had, perforce, to give me a name. One claimed that I possessed the dark eyes of the Iberian; another that my complexion was as fair as the Norseman; still another — he was an old man — that I had the elusive charm of Hibernian women. Though how the good saint knew so much about Hibernian women —

GUIBERT

(*Offensively*) Offspring of some Bohemian crew!

FELIX

(*Very sweetly*) Perchance, your Grace, like the great Doctor of Hippo, had a worldly youth? (*Consternation*)

HAROLD

He, he! A young hawk soars high and twitters.

GUIBERT

And is impudent!

HAROLD

An over confident recklessness provocative of smiles, not anger.

FELIX

In a kind of Graeco-Roman, catch-as-catch-can, they dubbed me Felix, after the lay brother who kindly succored, and Cosmos — well, I suppose, because it covers any country, any race, and, like charity, a multitude of sins.

GUIBERT

(*Sarcastically*) A credit you are to your benefactors!

FELIX

(*Innocently*) I hope they share your high approval.

GODFREY

Insolent!

FELIX

I am very adaptable; the customs and vernacular of my —

GUIBERT

You justify suicide?

FELIX

Why not? It is the logic of a Roman Senate's dethronement of Jove.

GUIBERT

Paganism!

FELIX

Then destroy the golden calf.

GODFREY

Heed him not. His courage is all in his tongue. He is even afraid of his purse; refuses the game, shows a white feather —

FELIX

To gamblers? Harpies who snare with the bird-lime of deceit, deify thievery and call it honor, knaves whose opulence is wrung from misfortune? Yes.

GODFREY

Heavens! Is that why you declined —

FELIX

I occasionally play for amusement and the study of character. It may be unnecessary. The obvious does not intrigue.

GODFREY

(*Losing temper*) For the aspersion you shall make amend!

FELIX

How does dignity appraise it — what's the interpretation?

GODFREY

(*Passionately*) I demand satisfaction!

FELIX

Declined, with thanks.

CONRAD

The same flippant rejoinder you made to my —

FELIX

I had no desire, my dear Margrave, to assume the responsibility of the support of your widow and orphans.

GUIBERT

Coward's solace!

FELIX

Your Grace wears a cincture, not a bandoleer.

OMNES

(*Jeers of derision.*)

GUIBERT

The applause for which you bid!

FELIX

Large game do not dread a noisy stalker.

GODFREY

Hares run at the bark of the beagle!

FELIX

A dog that yelps but does not fight.

GODFREY

There are —

FELIX

(*Smiling*) Others? Of course; terriers, for instance.

OMNES

Deeds! Enough of words!

GODFREY

Now then, satisfaction to me, or for you ignoble exile!

FELIX

(*With light laughter*) I nibble not the bait.

GODFREY

Craven, milksop —

FELIX

I swallow it so the barbed prongs of the hook sink deep into my vitals. Here, gentlemen, or without, do I condescend (*draws sword. Godfrey does same*) to try the skill and test the wrist of your champion, noble Godfrey of Sudermann!

OMNES

Hear him! 'Tis well!

FELIX

And Count, I promise — not to kill you Come!

OMNES

Hist — the King!

Enter HENRY, *R., in great passion, throws a parchment roll he is carrying on table.*

God preserve our Liege Lord! (*Felix and Godfrey hastily put up swords.*)

HENRY

Read! Read, if it blast not the sight!

GUIBERT

(*Picks up roll; others gather about him*) Refuses to reopen the question of your marriage?

OMNES

Incredible!

HENRY

Treats our person with contempt; prates of the rights of women as if they were men's equals; reminds us of the careful investigation of Peter Damiani and the prayerful consideration of "our saintly predecessor"; indulges in sanctimonious cant! We start for Rome today. Our august person may be more potent than the reasoning of our Cardinal-Advocate. There is conviction in glittering cohorts. Hildebrand may be pope; we are King and Emperor! To our closet and devise means to rebuke pretension and remove the false monk who usurps the throne of Peter. (*Exits R. 1, followed by all except Harold and Felix.*)

HAROLD

(*X's to door and stops. To Felix*) Our young cock-sparrow fledgling —

FELIX

Eh?

HAROLD

Yes, you! — seems to be in a hurry for a funeral oration.

FELIX

Have I indicated such aberration?

HAROLD

You have kissed the headsman's axe. (*Returns to C.*) Whether you enjoy the nice things uttered over your decapitated clay depends, if I understand theologians aright, on climatic conditions.

FELIX

Let's hope they'll be temperate.

HAROLD

You mouthed like a common street-brawler.

FELIX

(*Laughs*) Only a mental suggestion always unnerving to arrant cowardice.

HAROLD

But of yourself?

FELIX

I can handle a sword.

HAROLD

You are an enigma who gallantly and stupidly courts catastrophe. Is it true, as they assert, you are a Roman spy?

FELIX

Do I look it?

HAROLD

How am I to — No, your gaze is too clear and steady.

FELIX

Then throw your cap and bells to the fools who should sport them!

HAROLD

Still, I may be deceived.

FELIX

My absence from yonder conference, my indifference to its proceedings . . .

HAROLD

I have considered that. . . . The King, I am afraid,

will do something rash — something he'll regret. It bodes ill for the Pope.

FELIX

Hildebrand will make his enemies his footstool!

HAROLD

He's an upstart — the son of a carpenter of Soana!

FELIX

Fitting to be the vicar of the Son of the Carpenter of Nazareth. He may fail in his exalted mission; but if high ideal, indomitable courage and unflinching fearlessness are qualities that prevail, he will leave a gigantic imprint on the history of mankind.

HAROLD

Still, if he —

Enter MARY, *L., carrying cut flowers.*

FELIX

The Mistress Mary!

MARY

(*Modestly*) Greetings to the gentlemen!

HAROLD

I must lend an ear to what goes on. (*X's and exits R. 1.*)

MARY

Accept a bloom. (*Hands Felix a flower which he takes, smells and lightly kisses.*)

FELIX

Delicious!

MARY

(*Graciously*) A delicate compliment from one indifferent to our sex.

FELIX

I am not so perjured.

MARY

Report does thee ill; it is spoken at court.

FELIX

If the court only prayed with the regularity and devotion it gossips!

MARY

It was openly pronounced by the stately — but there, I must not disclose —

FELIX

Clodel! See how accurately I finish it! I confess to a want of appreciation of her charms that may — it was rude, I admit — have revealed itself in a decided preference for others. My reputation grows apace!

MARY

It compares favorably with many.

FELIX

Sweet drink well dashed with wormwood! How like you your new surroundings?

MARY

There is freedom and yet much restraint.

FELIX

Good tonics in proper season and mild doses.

MARY

The men are forward: their jests are coarse and —

FELIX

Not nursed in honesty?

MARY

The women terrify. My mother would drop of shame heard she the stories they relate.

FELIX

Old-fashioned ideas, eh? Crimson banners of modesty and all that sort of thing?

MARY

I wish I had not come; or, in truth, been sent. I am happier in valleys where brooks sing, in woods where winds whisper, on the top of ancient hills where heaven and the angels are so near.

FELIX

Arcady! Song, music and all the superlative harmonies!

MARY

My dreams deceived. They visualized armored knights — champions of the weak; beautiful women — inspirers of lofty sentiment and act. The reality: jealous recrimination, stinging venom and artificial heroics for idle days.

FELIX

Not forgetting a pulchritude that owes its freshness and fairness to the toilet jar.

MARY

Charlemagne's sword is sheathed and venerated as a relic, Otto's deeds remembered only by students. The past glory of Franconia lies in an attic of oblivion within a casket of dust.

FELIX

Romance flees contagion that kills. When the glance of a woman's eye prompts not courage, when innocence appeals in vain to princely integrity, when chivalry turns a deaf ear to the orphan's cry, then you must look for valor in a china shop and seek poetry in a Turkish bazaar.

MARY

I'll not believe that beauty and truth ever perish. The scene, actors and situation may change but the play goes on.

FELIX

In a transformed, perhaps modified, form. The Sermon on the Mount is an eternal verity; the fortitude of poverty has no historian, the bravery of the lowly no herald.

MARY

If a chosen priesthood desert the temple, humbler and holier hands will be found to trim the sanctuary lamp.

FELIX

All of which leads to —

MARY

The Queen.

FELIX

She has heard?

MARY

Yes, and in her perfect love for Henry pities him. But where are the arms that should shield her from disgrace and foul desertion?

FELIX

Shining in their leather surtouts — weapons are now fashionable only in pastime. His Majesty, I know, is delighted; so delighted that he thinks the burden of office too onorous for Gregory's years.

MARY

Clodel —

FELIX

Has the favorite's fear and wanton's alarm!

MARY

Curses, weeps and swears she'll die of a broken heart.

FELIX

That's a malady fatal to wives, never courtezans. Clodel need be in no haste to order her shroud.

MARY

Her Majesty is too good for her deceitful husband.

FELIX

Beware — LÈSE MAJESTÉ!

MARY

What is that?

FELIX

The unpardonable crime of telling the truth about kings.

MARY

Oh, I wish I were a man!

FELIX

Thank heaven, you're not. So, they called me a woman hater? (*Tenderly*) Mary — what a lovely name! — there

is one of the sex I could admire. (*Puts arm about her*) I will tell you of her. (*Leads her off R.*)

Enter HENRY, GUIBERT, HAROLD, GODFREY, CONRAD *and* COURTIERS, *R. 1.*

HENRY

Conrad, to you we assign the duty of making ready. (*Exit Conrad, R.*) To you Count, the accompanying army. (*Exit Godfrey, L.*) Gentlemen, to you the several things that pertain to our comfort. (*Harold and Courtiers exit in different directions*) Guibert, for you we see a tiara.

GUIBERT

(*Bowing low*) I am most unworthy —

HENRY

(*Playfully*) Say not so. We are well acquainted with your obvious and ill-disguised er — modesty and morality. (*Sternly*) Hildebrand must be taught that the power which makes can unmake. Such is ours by prescription and the oath of John. . . . See that the dilatory habits of your cloth delay us not. Among the many priceless treasures buried at the foot of the rainbow is the priestly virtue of punctuality.

GUIBERT

Oh, Sire —

HENRY

I have little doubt that the stupendous gravity of Judgment Day proceedings will be irreverently interrupted by many straggling, belated churchmen.

GUIBERT

Your Majesty deigns to be facetious.

HENRY

Conformity to fact is the saving grace of lampoonery; otherwise, it is clumsy malice. Begone!

GUIBERT

(*Bowing himself off R.*) You have but to command.

Enter BERTHA, *L.*

HENRY

My beloved is most opportune.

BERTHA

(*Timidly*) Heard you from the Vatican?

HENRY

By the same courier dispatched to you.

BERTHA

And you are not disappointed — angry?

HENRY

(*Dissembling*) On the contrary, I am pleased beyond measure.

BERTHA

Thank God, thank God!

HENRY

He finds no canonical impediments.

BERTHA

None ever really existed.

HENRY

To be sure. Ah, it removes a heavy burden from my soul!

BERTHA

It gives to me my husband! (*Throws herself into his arms.*)

HENRY

I am yours 'till death. But, pray, be not so overwhelmed, so demonstrative.

BERTHA

Say you love me. My ears long for the jubilant words.

HENRY

I do. Now more than ever.

BERTHA

My wounded heart heals 'neath the unguent of your graciousness — it anoints with the chrism of blessedness!

HENRY

You thought me harsh. I was not. I was just — just to you, to myself. A conflict between love and duty. My

passion for you was consuming; but conscience, like vermin in a warrior's bed, pricked and disturbed repose. I was overscrupulous: I was wrong — I know it now. Still, believe me, it had all the stalking terror of a ghostly phantom.

BERTHA

It is gone, my loved one — gone! The Great White Father of Christendom has spoken and evil flies the exorcist.

HENRY

To the limbo of forgetfulness I consign it.

BERTHA

Oh, if man but knew the ever-aching ecstatic bliss of woman's love! Its depth unplummable, its height immeasurable, its circumference the horizon. It is blind to shortcomings, but has eyes that magnify nobleness; it brooks no rival for it is jealous of its possession; to the giver and receiver it is a benediction—or a curse. There is nothing it will not do, dare and suffer for its adored; encouraged, its feebleness ripens into omnipotence; scorned, it has no asylum but the grave! Henry, if you need sacrifice, my absence, my life — speak, speak your will!

HENRY

I would have you grace that which you adorn. To the nation, Queen and Empress; to me, companion and consoler. . . . Make speed to travel. I am sending you to Mayence, where shortly I join you. There, with solemn *Te Deum*, we will renew our troth and proclaim our unbreakable, immutable fidelity.

BERTHA

Do not tarry. I shall count the hours.

CLODEL

(*From without*) H-e-n-r-y! (*The affected drawl of familiarity*) Where are you, Henry?

BERTHA

(*Agitated*) Oh, and in this supreme hour!

Enter CLODEL, *R.*; *she talks and acts with a confidence begotten of intimacy; she is sly, vindictive and shows a veneered coarseness.*

HENRY

(*Annoyed at the interruption*) Ah!

CLODEL

Is it true, Henry, we leave —

HENRY

(*Motioning her to retire*) Withdraw a moment.

BERTHA

What does the woman mean?

HENRY

I don't know; too much wine, perhaps.

BERTHA

And a presumption liquor dare not prompt!

HENRY

Hereafter, I'll explain.

BERTHA

Explain now! She calls you by a name sacred to my lips. Why does she insult us with her presence?

CLODEL

(*Ironically*) A thousand pardons. I did not observe Your Majesty.

BERTHA

(*Regally*) Sufficient! Retire!

CLODEL

(*Vindictively satiric*) Your Majesty, I trust, has quite recovered? Choice intelligence, I hear, has come from Rome.

BERTHA

Enough! You are dismissed.

CLODEL

(*To Henry*) When does the cortege start?

HENRY

I will send for you —

CLODEL

I would know, so that —

BERTHA

(*Dignified*) Command that woman to retire!

HENRY

She is of my train —

BERTHA

But not of mine.

HENRY

— attached to our person.

BERTHA

So she seems.

CLODEL

(*Sweetly*) Her Majesty appears to be indisposed. Perchance no message came, or I was ill informed of its tenor.

BERTHA

Husband, spare me this humiliation.

HENRY

(*To Clodel*) Hence, for a moment.

CLODEL

(*As before*) I can sympathize, for I know the mortification of disappointed anticipation.

BERTHA

I'll not submit! Insult! Ridicule! A butt — diversion for the sarcasm of a harlot!

HENRY

(*Appealingly*) For heaven's sake —

CLODEL

(*Indignantly*) Madam, you forget yourself!

HENRY

(*Sternly*) Desist! Go!

CLODEL

Queen or no queen, she shall not traduce nor question my virtue!

BERTHA

Am I the queen?

HENRY

(*Despairfully*) Harrass me not with such questions. Great heavens! What vexations!

CLODEL

(*In a rage*) She may be Queen — in name! A crown may exalt the commonest clay, but it confers no license to defame — no patent of superiority on the daughter of an impecunious Italian margrave!

BERTHA

(*Goes to L.*) Guard!

CLODEL

Upstart! Mushroom!

Enter ZITHER, *L.*

BERTHA

(*To him*) Remove that woman!

CLODEL

Henry, you will not suffer —

HENRY

Go, go, go-o!

CLODEL

Not until I —

BERTHA

(*To Zither*) Obey orders.

HENRY

(*To Bertha*) Madam, remember —

BERTHA

I am queen. I do. Remove at once that —

HENRY

(*Links Clodel's arm*) Allow me. (*Escorts her to R. and bows her out. Exit Zither, L. To Bertha*) Have you no thought for my position?

BERTHA

Aye, and for my own. (*Drops into seat weeping.*)

HENRY

There, there, no tears! State affairs give her countenance. Her family is large, influential —

BERTHA

And has the might of empire to bow to the house of the White-necked Wolf? Is it seemly to pander to licentiousness?

HENRY

Be reasonable!

BERTHA

Be king! Let the throne be an example to the people of domestic felicity; let me be its humblest devotee.

HENRY

(*Raising her up*) It shall be so. (*Kisses her*) My tribute to your supremacy. Hence for the journey. (*Leads her to L. and bows her out.*)

Enter GODFREY, *R.*

(*Laughing*) Ha, ha, ha! Count, a narrow margin! The fox nearly left his tail in the trap. My lady has a sweet, pretty temper distinctively and peculiarly her own. She never heard the Eastern saying: Kings must have secrets — even from their wives.

GODFREY

An intricate problem on which my advice is valueless.

HENRY

Listen to me. I would entrust you with a great confidence. I know I can place every reliance in you.

GODFREY

You require no voucher for my fidelity.

HENRY

True. The Queen starts immediately for Mayence accompanied by an officer and twenty men.

Enter HUBERT, *reading breviary, L. C.; remains on gallery.*

GODFREY

The number is small.

HENRY

Ample. When they reach the banks of the Shelva the party must be attacked. In the dark and in the confusion — well, the bridge is narrow and the waters swift. Should the Queen make a misstep. . . .

GODFREY

Majesty — I — I —

HENRY

Heartless, you would say. And so it seems. Do not, however, quickly condemn or blame too much. As infants, Bertha and I were betrothed. As children, we were married. Our wishes were not consulted. Our parents, not we, were the high-contracting parties. She loves me, I admit. It is not and never has been reciprocal. Distaste has fruited into dislike — aversion, abhorrence. I detest her superior virtues; her clinging, cringing worship, the incense of prayer and the odor of sanctity — oh, it frays the raw edges of the nerves!

GODFREY

Are there not other, less drastic means?

HENRY

To Pope Alexander I appealed for an anullment of the union. Grounds: We were related within the forbidden degrees and there was no dispensation of the impediment; the ceremony wanted in canonical requisites; the marriage was never consummated. Alexander sent Peter Damiani, an ascetic devoid of blood and with marrow chilled in some Polish well-spring, to investigate. He found all issues against us. Hildebrand, as you are aware, is not more pliant. I must be freed from such hateful consort. There may be other but this is the swiftest and surest way. An accident — the will of Heaven — the inscrutable design of Providence! My person, my throne, my succession, must no longer suffer. Is it not sufficient justification?

GODFREY

Sire, in all things I am your loyal and, I hope, discreet servant.

During the foregoing Hubert's face expresses wonder, horror, loathing. He gradually backs to door L. C., exits and partly closes it.

HENRY

Good!

GODFREY

Who heads the twenty?

HENRY

For you to name.

GODFREY

Felix Cosmos.

HENRY

An inconsequential, amusing fellow; I would not have him killed.

GODFREY

Your enemy.

HENRY

Out-on-you!

GODFREY

Sent by Hildebrand to spy.

HENRY

You are sure?

GODFREY

I know the secret channels by which your many meritorious deeds—

HENRY

(*Cynically*) Eh?

GODFREY

— are ripened into rottenness on their way to Rome.

HENRY

(*Savagely*) Speak you the truth?

GODFREY

It is my witness!

HENRY

Let us seek him. He will be honored to receive at our hands — his death warrant.

GODFREY

Dare I mention reward?

HENRY

Has our gratitude ever needed a spur?

GODFREY

My request is so excessive as —

HENRY

Saving our crown and revenues, it is yours for the asking.

GODFREY

I would marry —

HENRY

And regret it? Fie!

GODFREY

— the Princess Mildred of Bavaria.

HENRY

(*Hesitation*) Oh!

GODFREY

It is not cupidity that prompts the desire, though of late I've been necessitous. Her fortune, great as it is, does not match her beauty.

HENRY

Our rewards do not tarry or service age in expectancy. To friend and foe alike is this true. By the plague you shall have the plague! The wench is yours.

GODFREY

She is somewhat gracious to the suit of Raimond of Nordheim.

HENRY

Ah, that's bad. . . . Nordheim is powerful and occasionally disturbing. However, I am ignorant of her intentions; I have not been approached on the subject; we act in good faith. Let the lady's day dream live in memory; otherwise, she is yours. (*Exeunt R. 1.*)

Enter HUBERT, *L. C., and* OTTO, *R.*

HUBERT

Never sight more welcome to my fading eyes.

OTTO

(*Takes his hand*) Why this agitation? You shiver as if you had seen a Gargantuan apparition.

HUBERT

I have listened to satanic speech. It projects the Queen's death.

OTTO

(*Kindly*) My lord, pardon, you're in your dotage.

HUBERT

Would that I were! Hearken to assassination by a king contrived: Bertha leaves for Mayence to be ambushed at the Shelva, her retainers killed and she cast into the waters.

OTTO

Who told this incredible tale?

HUBERT

Ears listened and were not deceived — mine own! Godfrey of Sudermann has the warrant.

OTTO

Who leads the guard?

HUBERT

Felix Cosmos.

OTTO

To me, a stranger.

HUBERT

Overbold, and, if I do not misjudge, with circumspection not well seasoned. Here he is.

Enter FELIX, *R.*

OTTO

(*To him*) Felix Cosmos?

FELIX

Sir, the advantage is yours.

OTTO

Baron Otto of Nordheim.

FELIX

The honor is mine.

OTTO

You attend her Majesty to Mayence?

FELIX

The distinction has been done me.

OTTO

A plot has been hatched to destroy the Queen. You and your companions are to be ambushed and murdered.

FELIX

Pleasant! Being forewarned —

HUBERT

Useless! Your men-at-arms are not to be depended on — likely prison scamps and rogues who think they are purchasing liberty by donning the King's livery; instead, they go to execution. I know, I heard the deviltry.

FELIX

Inspired by —

HUBERT

The King, and entrusted to Count Godfrey.

FELIX

A fitting instrument! It is serious.

OTTO

With our wits we must circumvent.

FELIX

Oh, if I had — I know a man worth twenty — surpassing in prowess —

OTTO

There was one such: the captain of the guard who with provoking ease disarmed four of us at the tourney two decades ago. He is dead.

FELIX

The same. And he lives. I am a pupil and disciple of his. He is now a monk — a monk who figuratively carries a sword under a cassock: Anselm, Abbot of Limwenlock.

Enter RAIMOND, *L., stands back.*

OTTO

Heaven be praised! Is he far from us?

FELIX

Some leagues, but not too many if I had a trusty, determined —

RAIMOND

(*Stepping forward*) Is it an adventure worthy of Nordheim?

OTTO, FELIX *and* HUBERT, *simultaneously:*

It is.

RAIMOND

Then, who more reliable than Otto's son?

FELIX

None. Come, we will enlighten you. (*Exits with Raimond and Otto, L. 1*)

Enter BERTHA, MILDRED, MARY *and* MAIDS, *L.*
Enter HENRY, GODFREY, CONRAD *and* COURTIERS, *R.*

BERTHA

Husband, I am ready.

HENRY

It is well. Your suite does not accompany you. I am sorry, but the time at our disposal did not permit of making provision for it. They remain to follow with us.

BERTHA

Your will is my pleasure.

HENRY

The inconvenience will be trifling. Farewell.

BERTHA

Good-by, loved one. Make haste. The hours will have laggard's feet until we meet. Hurry to my impatience. (*Throws herself into his arms*)

HENRY

Peace be with you! (*Kisses her; they part; he turns to Mildred*) Princess, accept the assurance of our estimation.

MILDRED

(*Courtesying*) Your Majesty is ever gracious.

HENRY

We would give further evidence of our interest in you.

MILDRED

You are exceedingly kind.

HENRY

We have chosen for you a husband.

MILDRED

(*Surprise and perplexed apprehension*) Oh, Sire!

HENRY

One of title and worth.

MILDRED

I — I —

HENRY

Hither, Godfrey Count of Sudermann, salute your affianced.

MILDRED

Good God! No, no, I am promised to another!

HENRY

Regrettable. We were not consulted. The ladies of the court, you should have remembered, have no will but the King's, no ambition but to please him, no pleasure but in obedience.

BERTHA

Henry, what is it you do?

HENRY

Promote the happiness of two subjects very dear to me.

MILDRED

I cannot — cannot —

BERTHA

Can there be happiness where —

HENRY

Silence!

MILDRED

(*Passionate defiance*) Never! I will not submit!

HENRY

Eh, no? Consider — well, we overlook the breach; it is the first occasion we ever heard the words.

GODFREY

I accept this indication of your Majesty's approval with pride.

MILDRED

(*Drops on knee and clutches Bertha's skirt*) Gracious Mistress, by my years of devoted service, by your own holy love —

BERTHA

(*Raises and kisses her*) Child, I am powerless.

MILDRED

(*Drops on both knees*) God in heaven, pity and protect me! Mother of the Most High, look upon your daughter and make intercession for her; all ye Holy Angels and Saints intercede for me! (*Turns to Hubert*) Hubert, Lord Bishop, guardian who has been all that a father could be, do not desert me in my extremity!

HUBERT

(*Diffidently*) She is my ward. I protest — I —

HENRY

(*Catches him by wrist and drags him forward*) Consent!

HUBERT

I cannot — I —

HENRY

Consent!

HUBERT

I — I — consent.

MILDRED

Lost! All is lost! Take me hence — my limbs are — are powerless — I — I — I'm dying — cannot see — (*Swoons and drops on floor*)

From without L. is heard a fanfare of trumpets, sound of steel on steel, tramping horses, etc.

HENRY

(*Goes L. and calls off, cynically*) Summon the leech! Our goodness has overpowered a lady.

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

LIMWENLOCK ABBEY. Garden exterior, full stage. The building is set at back; five or six stone steps lead up to its main entrance. Table and benches R. and L. C.

CURTAIN to the ringing of a bell, like Angelus' Bell.

DISCOVERED: Anselm standing at top of steps in meditation. Makes sign of the cross as bell stops.

Enter MILDRED, *L., in haste, spent and distressed; staggers to her knees at foot of steps.*

MILDRED

Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

ANSELM

Surely, my child. (*Comes down and raises her*) It is for all who reach Limwenlock's consecrated ground.

MILDRED

My gratitude is — is boundless.

ANSELM

From whom do you flee?

MILDRED

The King's men.

ANSELM

What law have you transgressed?

MILDRED

None ordained of God.

ANSELM

But the crime?

MILDRED

Love.

ANSELM

(*Shrugging shoulders*) It's a wound for which, I fear, no salve may be found here. You do not look criminal.

MILDRED

I am not criminal. Listen to me, father. I am the Princess Mildred of Bavaria, lady-in-waiting to Our Lady, the Queen.

ANSELM

(*Thoughtfully*) Surprises multiply!

MILDRED

I love Raimond of Nordheim; he loves me; we are pledged each to the other. The King disapproves — is incensed; forbids the troth and commands me to marry his favorite, the hateful Count Godfrey of Sudermann.

ANSELM

So, so, — ah, yes: two and two — does it make four?

MILDRED

I was a virtual prisoner under the espionage of Henry's mis — I cannot say the distasteful word.

ANSELM

I understand.

MILDRED

— subject to her obnoxious presence and many importunities. Last night, in the dark, with nothing to guide, I fled the camp. I travelled the long hours through, by road, by field, in woods. Hungry, weary, footsore and heart-broken, I crave shelter.

ANSELM

You shall have it. (*As he leads her up abbey steps*) Your immediate want is refreshment and rest. (*She goes within; he remains at door*)

Enter ZITHER, *L. and* ANHALT, *who is short of stature, R.; both stutter and each is unaware of the other's impediment.*

ZITHER *and* ANHALT *announce simultaneously*

P-p-pre-p-pare —

DITTO

W-w-whom d-d-do you m-m-mock?

ZITHER

Z-z-zounds, I-I'll make splin-n-nters of y-y-your p-p-pate!

ANHALT

D-d-dog of D-d-danube, I-I'll —

ANSELM

Peace! What roysterers' wrangle disturbs our holy calm?

ZITHER *and* ANHALT, *simultaneously*

H-h-he r-r-rid — H-h-hear him!

ANSELM

Stay, do you stutter?

ZITHER *and* ANHALT, *simultaneously*

I-I-I do.

ANSELM

You both have the same affliction.

ZITHER *and* ANHALT, *simultaneously*

O-o-oh!

ANSELM

One at a time. (*To Anhalt*) What woulds't thou?

ANHALT

An-n-n-nounce the c-c-coming of m-my m-m-m-master H-h-hermann, Ar-r-rchduke of B-b-bremen.

ZITHER

(*Laughs sarcastically*) Ha, ha, ha!

ANSELM

(*To Zither*) And you?

ZITHER

T-t-to or-r-r-rder —

ANHALT

(*Contemptuously*) Or-r-r-rder!

ZITHER

— ev-v-v-very thing m-made r-r-ready for the re-e-e-ception of my m-m-m-master Henry, k-k-king and emp-p-peror!

ANHALT

(*Chagrined*) O-Oh!

ANSELM

Our dutiful greetings to both. Depart! (*Goes up and exits into abbey*)

ZITHER

(*At L.*) R-r-runt! (*Exits L.*)

ANHALT

(*At R.*) Gra-a-a-aceful gir-r-r-affe! (*Exits R.*)

Enter OTTO *and* RAIMOND, *R.*

RAIMOND

The camp was so guarded I could not approach.

OTTO

I know it is easy to advise and hard to follow. But you must exercise more patience.

RAIMOND

Father, do not say so! There is the demand of duty and the call of blood. The shepherd is not sleeping when the wolf is abroad; the spoiler's cry is the clarion of the warrior; must the countenance pale and the heart petrify when treachery and concupiscence flout decency? Shall manhood be traitor when virtue sues protection and purity shrinks the defilement of glutton lust? No, no, never, never!

OTTO

The danger is not imminent. All is not lost. Henry may still be amenable to reason. Precipitancy oft thwarts the best design.

RAIMOND

But my loved one! And you say I must be idle! It is not natural, not human — Oh, I cannot, cannot! Action! Virtue, honor, happiness demand it!

OTTO

That approaches of which you know little. It is silent, but it comes nevertheless. It is justice, and it often assumes the appalling shape of red terror.

RAIMOND

And while we await its tardiness —

OTTO

It can be long-suffering in its labor; nevertheless, it is wiser not to force the birth.

RAIMOND

I am young, human, the warmest of warm blood courses madly in my veins! My peace has been destroyed, my hope crushed; my love — the very light of my existence — suffers wrongs atrocious to heaven — God, the very thought unseats reason! (*Drops into seat at table R.*)

OTTO

I suffer with you; but be guided by me — do nothing without consulting me. (*Exits into abbey*)

Enter GODFREY, *L.*

GODFREY

(*Superciliously*) Self-communing! Pleasant or unpleasant retrospection?

RAIMOND

(*Jumps up and draws sword*) You? Heaven has sent you. Draw!

GODFREY

Young valor waxes into extravagance.

RAIMOND

It is a moment pregnant with more than flippant jest; soon your lips shall cease to form them. Draw!

GODFREY

If I refuse?

RAIMOND

Nonetheless, in dastard heart will virgin steel be sullied!

GODFREY

. Heroics! (*Advances towards him*) Strike!

RAIMOND

(*Drops sword point to ground*) A coward's ruse to evade punishment! Poltroon, craven, whelp, I spit upon the spawn —

GODFREY

(*Draws*) And with mongrel's tongue lick it up! (*They cross swords and fight fiercely. After many passes, Otto enters from Abbey, draws sword and comes down; throws up their weapons with his. Both contestants are breathing hard*)

OTTO

Stop!

RAIMOND

To one side, father!

OTTO

No!

GODFREY

Is this fair?

OTTO

Enough!

RAIMOND

For the honor of Nordheim?

OTTO

No!

RAIMOND

For Mildred?

OTTO

A thousand times, no!

GODFREY

(*Scornfully puts up sword*) The paternal solicitude of Nordheim but postpones the day.

RAIMOND

Fear not, it will come!

GODFREY

The sooner —

OTTO

Cease! When more than a half century and the scars of innumerable campaigns have calmed the passions of youth, tranquilized and mellowed the outlook, experience will quench vanity and courage be deaf to all entreaties not evoked by patriotism or affronted equity.

GODFREY

Sententious and — hardly convincing. Adieu. (*Exits L.*)

OTTO

(*Sheaths sword*) Needless to say, I am not pleased.

RAIMOND

(*Sheathing sword*) What would you have me do?

OTTO

Keep your head out of the lion's mouth. Had you killed him —

RAIMOND

Mildred would have been free.

OTTO

But not for your arms. Death would have been your bride.

RAIMOND

What of it if it had rid the earth —

OTTO

Raimond, child of my most tender concern, time advances, soon must my lance rest and shield hang —

RAIMOND

Distant be the day!

OTTO

In no far future, your legacy — the burden and responsibility of Nordheim, will be yours. I would have you strong yet tender, firm but merciful, a leader and teacher in Israel.

RAIMOND

If I had your attributes —

OTTO

Our people are simple but barbaric in origin and instinct; they can be easily excited to great deeds, but they are reverential and imitative — the one for the crown; the other for its lapses. As vice is seductive, virtue

suffers . . . Sufficient to point out to you that the people are misled and dazzled by the evils that culture in high places.

RAIMOND

But the future — it has promise?

OTTO

Henry — God forgive me! — whom another age will describe as famous for all that was infamous, is emboldened to rashness by the false security of a powerful army; he has it not.

RAIMOND

Surely you are mistaken?

OTTO

For the country's welfare, I hope so. On the horizon loom portentous omens of bitter internecine strife and bloody external conflict. The King's arrogance, the envy of our neighbors, this continual war with the Holy See . . .

RAIMOND

It is not a fair picture.

OTTO

No fancy sketches it. But two in all the kingdom stand ready for emergency: Bremen and Nordheim.

RAIMOND

Bremen? You amaze me.

OTTO

Hermann is no fool.

RAIMOND

His talk belies him.

OTTO

True, he acts it. In that respect, I do not understand him. The King, fearful of all power he does not control, hearing ill-defined rumors of the Archduke's army, sent him to France as his representative in the Septimania difficulty. His motive was by personal visit to discover —

RAIMOND

And he found?

OTTO

Nothing. Hermann had misgivings and took forethought for ally. When Henry expressed a desire to see the wonderful army of which he had heard much there was paraded a battalion of awkward retainers as the maximum of Bremen's noble defenders. Ha, ha, ha! (*Hearty laughter*) By the saints, it was good!

RAIMOND

(*Joining in laugh*) Delightful! I never would have credited the Duke with such sagacious cunning.

OTTO

Why he does the harlequin is incomprehensible. I suspect method in his madness.

RAIMOND

What of our own? It has more interest.

OTTO

Of all classes of the service, we can muster 15,000, armed, trained and ready, with still sufficient to protect our homes against roving robber bands.

RAIMOND

That is why you devote so much time to military affairs?

OTTO

Under me, you are first in command. Hence, I enjoin the cultivation of all the qualities fit to consort with the fearlessness to which you are no stranger. I seek Father Anselm. (*Exits into abbey. Raimond goes off R.*)

Without, loud laughter and camp noises. Enter ANHALT, *R., bowing and backing to C.;* ZITHER, *L., ditto; at C. they meet, turn and scowl at each other and retire, respectively, up R. and L.*

Enter HERMANN, *R., followed by retainers.*

HERMANN

Gad-a-mercy, what a noise! (*Retires up R.*)

Enter L., HENRY *escorting* CLODEL, *followed by* HAROLD, GUIBERT, HUBERT, CONRAD, MARY, MAIDS *and* COURTIERS.

HENRY

(*To Clodel*) Good! My lady, you are always superb, but you surpass yourself today!

CLODEL

It is well to know one pleases; and I am grateful for the opportunity of seeing Limwenlock.

HENRY

Behold it!

CLODEL

A repleting feast for hungry eyes. A fortress of piety in a profusion of nature. I'll warrant it is as luxurious within as without. Eh, my Harry?

HENRY

Come now, no more covetous eyes for monastery plate!

CLODEL

(*Coaxingly*) But Harry, this must be exceeding choice.

HAROLD

If't be the lady's pleasure,
She must have the treasure.

CLODEL

I commend the fool's wisdom.

HENRY

On our head has already fallen —

HAROLD

Monks may storm and chide,
Pray and fume and try to hide;
But how long can they resist
If the fair one still persist?

OMNES

Ha, ha, ha! (*Loud laughter*)

CLODEL

(*Laughingly, as she exits with Mary and lady retainers into abbey*) It is more than wit, it is knowledge; knowledge that the master should have mastered long ago.

HENRY

Be careful!

Enter GODFREY, *hurriedly, L.*

GODFREY

(*Taking Henry down R.*) Something on which we had not calculated.

HENRY

Eh?

GODFREY

Betrayal or surprising coincidence!

HENRY

Yes?

GODFREY

A wounded soldier, dying — one of the attacking party — said that after they had killed or driven the Queen's retinue — the conspirators against your person, as he thought — into the river, they, in turn, were set upon by masked bandits and all of the company, excepting himself, put to the sword. He too had his thrust and is dead.

HENRY

The Queen?

GODFREY

Those we sent out early this morning — they who found the dying man — could discover no trace of her. Undoubtedly she, along with the rest, met with — dire mishap.

HENRY

Free! At last we are free! (*Hermann comes down*)

GODFREY

Hist!

HERMANN

Sire, your ambassador salutes!

HENRY

(*Now in a facetious and mocking mood*) By the shoemender, so you do!

HERMANN

I was making all speed with the report of —

HENRY

The alert, sagacious and statesmanlike manner you executed our trust?

HERMANN

Your graciousness overpowers.

HAROLD

Oh, innocent lamb, bleating while it goes to slaughter!

HENRY

To be unmindful of your inestimable service would not be gracious. You displayed exceptional skill.

HAROLD

A word that rhymes with kill.

HERMANN

(*Puzzled*) Eh?

HAROLD

I am gathering inspiration for a new ode — an epic in which you'll figure.

HENRY

Your prompt return indicates that the Frenchman feared you. You handled him with rare insight.

HERMANN

E'cod, I did.

HENRY

Beside your discernment he must have been the marionette of a country fair!

HERMANN

The Gaul is a skilled diplomat.

HENRY

Paugh, pigmie to the son of Bremen!

HERMANN

Your praise overbounds.

HENRY

It is but scant justice. Your modesty becomes your greatness.

HAROLD

Velvet paws —

HENRY

The ladies of the capital! Were they at all susceptible?

HAROLD

Hidden claws —

HENRY

Gadzooks, you're embarrassed, you blush!

HAROLD

Turn and toy —

HERMANN

Well, I must admit, they're charming women —

HAROLD

And then destroy!

HERMANN

— well qualified to turn a head less wise than mine.

HENRY

True, Sir Adonis! We defer to your insinuating address. But, as your words have honest coinage, was that all?

HERMANN

I do not know that I follow you. I am not so very old; I have an inherent and cultivated taste for the beautiful —

HENRY

(*To Omnes*) Attention! Let ears have no tongue, lips no words that winds might bear to the charming Duchess of Bremen! 'Tis a royal command.

HERMANN

Gad-a-mercy, no!

HENRY

(*Insinuatingly*) The nymphs — confess — beguiled, enchanted, flattered, kissed —

HERMANN

Hold fast, sire; hold fast! You assume — you press me hard.

HENRY

(*Accusingly*) And in a vortex of mad dissipation you forgot your mission and yourself! (*Turns and winks at Godfrey and others*)

HAROLD

Obliteration! *Requiescat in pace.*

HERMANN

W-w-wha —

HENRY

You consented to a protectorate over Septimania and acceded Narbona a free port.

HERMANN

Your very instructions.

HENRY

Dolt! Do you not know that diplomacy uses language the very opposite of what is intended? You're as wise as an owl — and as stupid.

HERMANN

Nothing could be more explicit —

HENRY

Dare you contend with your Lord and Ruler? Out of my sight ere I send you to the stocks!

HERMANN

(*As he goes up and exits into abbey*) Gratitude! Service! Reward!

OMNES

(*Ironic laughter*) Ha, ha, ha!

ANSELM, *who during this has entered from abbey, comes down stage.*

ANSELM

The welcome and hospitality of Limwenlock to the majesty that honors it.

HENRY

(*Twittingly*) Ah, not satisfied with your benefice — eyes on something better?

ANSELM

There is no better, and it is too good for my unworthiness.

HENRY

You are wise, Abbot.

ANSELM

Our obligation will be enhanced if you partake of refreshment.

Enter MONKS *from Abbey, pass round goblets and wine.*

HENRY

We'll empty a beaker to your prosperity. The vintage I'll hazard is —

ANSELM

The best our poor vaults can boast.

HENRY

(*Sips his*) By the saints, it's good! Jester, a song; your occupation seeds to melancholy.

HAROLD

I'm a rhymster not a bard.

HENRY

You're spring in all its verdure. Nevertheless, your doggerel — Lord knows it's that — is at the moment acceptable. (*Sits at table with Godfrey*)

OMNES

Aye, aye, a song! (*Some sit, some stand*)

HAROLD

(*At C. sings*)

When the gods send us favor
We praise them in wine;
'Tis meet for their honor,
This nectar divine.
Loud rings the cheer,
As passes the bowl,
To the mellow enchanter
That gladdens the soul.

OMNES, *chorus*

Praise to the root
That fathers the vine,
The mother of fruit
That presses to wine.

Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Tra-la-la tra-la-lay,
Salute we the blessing,
Long may it sway!

HAROLD

Our toast to the maiden
Who never lets slip
The joy overladen
That lurks on the lip.
Orbs framed in beauty
To light with their fire
The beacon that duty,
Hope, courage inspire.

OMNES

Our pledges ascend
To the shrine of the fair;
On our knees we commend
The gods have their care.
Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,
Tra-la-la, tra-la-lay,
Hail then to beauty,
Blessed be its sway!

Enter FELIX, *R.; stays up stage till close of song.*

HAROLD

With reverence we name
Whom the heavens hath sent
To add by his fame
To our nation's content.

In choicest of nectar,
In songs of the maid,
From serf to elector,
Let homage be paid.

OMNES

In grateful emotion
To the Lord do we raise
Hymns of devotion
That pulse with our praise;
From the hearts of the strong
Just tributes are welling,
The throats of the throng
Its accents are swelling,
Henry! Franconia! Forever! Hurrah!

FELIX

(*Down C.*) Bravo! Most excellent! Garlands for exalted worth!

HENRY *and* GODFREY, *simultaneously*

(*Jump to feet with surprise and consternation*) Cosmos!

FELIX

(*With bow. Through this scene he maintains an attitude of ingenuous simplicity*) Always, your most obedient.

HENRY

Unbounded surprise!

FELIX

And may I hope, delight?

HENRY

Have you been to Mayence?

FELIX

Not yet. When I saw you arrive —

GODFREY

You were not killed?

FELIX

Not to my knowing.

GODFREY

You were not attacked?

FELIX

How should you know?

Enter BERTHA, *U. L., unnoticed by reason of those she passes behind.*

HENRY

Your report! We have sent to unravel a rumor, obscure and dubious, brought us —

FELIX

By the Count?

HENRY

Just the meaning of that?

FELIX

I understood he joined you early this morning.

HENRY

Infernal! Set you a spy upon our doings?

FELIX

Sire, your anger is without fair cause. Peasants inhale so little of the perfume of a court, they needs must gossip. I have but lately walked abroad.

GODFREY

Were not your attendants slaughtered?

FELIX

If so, I have not been acquainted of it.

HENRY

Why do you fence? Where are they?

FELIX

The Count would have them in — perhaps, heaven.

HENRY

The Queen?—the Empress?

BERTHA

(*Stepping forward*) Here Henry, beloved.

HENRY

(*Taken aback but recovers quickly*) I am relieved — but I know not the meaning.

FELIX

The road was dark and treacherous. I deployed the guards and sent them on to make sure that all was safe. We were overtaken by a party of monks on the way hither; they told us that the river bank was infested with brigands, and besought us not to proceed; we were offered the hospitality of Limwenlock. My charge — your precious consort — was momentous. What could I do? I chose discretion. My caution, I trust, commends itself to your favor.

HENRY

It does. (*Significantly*) It shall be in everlasting remembrance.

FELIX

Let me beg of you to forget it.

HENRY

Such devotion to duty? Never!

FELIX

You are too thoughtful . . . (*Retires up stage*)

Enter MARY, CLODEL *and* RETAINERS *from abbey. Clodel comes down stage.*

HENRY

(*Putting Bertha in seat*) My sweet looks well. The fairest of roses bloom on the fairest of cheeks.

BERTHA

Now your words enrapture! Did intuition lead your steps this way?

HENRY

Some benevolent angel directed my feet to —

CLODEL

(*Touching his shoulder*) Gracious Master —

HENRY

(*Annoyed*) Well?

BERTHA

Again, that woman!

CLODEL

Mildred is within. Just now, at prayer, in the chapel I saw her.

GODFREY

She is ours; we must have her.

HENRY

Hither, monkish Abbot! (*Anselm advances*) Is it true you conceal a lady to our person attached?

ANSELM

The Princess Mildred claims the sanctuary of Limwenlock.

HENRY

There is no sanctuary against the crown.

GODFREY

(*To Henry*) Your promise! I rely —

HENRY

Produce her, monk, if of your benefice you give scant thought.

ANSELM

For three hundred years the portals of Limwenlock have been open to pursued innocence and hunted crime. Its walls have been adamant to the demands, threats and violence of courtiers, knights and nobles. They have resisted the oppressor and persecutor. They are the same, and as sacred, now as of yore. Ask not the impossible. They cannot, will not, dare not yield.

HENRY

When I return, they'll boast another abbot.

BERTHA

(*Rises*) Oh, Henry!

ANSELM

(*Resignation*) As God wills.

HENRY

As I will!

BERTHA

Husband, listen, would you fly —

HENRY

I command deliverance of my subject.

ANSELM

(*Quietly*) I refuse.

HENRY

I am King!

HAROLD

And kings can do no wrong. It is so, if lawyers be not arrant knaves.

ANSELM

(*Evenly*) To my feeble care has been entrusted Limwenlock's holy mesne and ancient prerogatives. While venerating your person and the throne it illuminates, I absolutely, positively refuse to alienate the one or forfeit the other.

HENRY

You challenge, defy —

ANSELM

In the name and in the protection of the Holy Trinity.

HENRY

Then you shall have the compulsion you court!

ANSELM

(*Aroused*) At your peril!

HENRY

Bah! (*Snaps fingers*) That for your maledictions!

BERTHA

Henry, for the love of heaven —

HENRY

Peace! (*To courtiers*) Attention!

ANSELM

For God's sake, desist! From the presence of the Blessed Sacrament you must drag her!

HENRY

The crime be on your head!

BERTHA

(*Clutching his arm*) Henry, husband, hear me! It is sacrilege you contemplate.

HENRY

(*Casts her into seat*) Another word sunders us forever!

BERTHA

God pity and forgive you! (*Weeps*)

HENRY

(*To attendants*) Within! Produce the Princess if it cost the raising of foundation stone! (*Anselm, at steps,*

tries to bar the way. Godfrey and Conrad throw him aside and, with others, rush steps)

Enter MILDRED *from abbey; stands in door.*

MILDRED

Stop! I would not purchase immunity at the cost of the profanation of the Holy of Holies! Let me pass. (*Way is made for her; she comes down*) Sire, I am here.

HENRY

Your decision is praiseworthy.

Enter OTTO *and* RAIMOND, *U. R., stand back. Raimond as if to rush down, Otto restraining him.*

MILDRED

Over my body, you have manorial right — I am the vassal. Do with it as your impulse prompts; load it with chains, drag it at the chariot wheel, break it on rack, confine it in dungeon — and be satisfied. My conscience, my will, my soul are my own; over them you have no lordship. In that domain you are as helpless as a child tossed by turbulent wave. I tell you now; nay, I swear, I will never marry Godfrey of Sudermann!

HENRY

Ha, ha, ha! (*Incredulous laughter*) To halter and saddle we have broken more intractable colts.

RAIMOND

(*Rushes down and throws himself at Henry's feet*) My liege, give ear to the petitions —

HENRY

What disturber have we now?

MILDRED

Raimond!

CONRAD

Son of Otto.

GODFREY

The cub of Nordheim.

RAIMOND

Sire, for the lady, for love, life, happiness I supplicate!

HENRY

Your right?

RAIMOND

She is my affianced.

HENRY

Not so. My word has pledged her to another.

RAIMOND

Default it! There would be no crime. Otherwise, the crime is violation and theft. She is all to me as I am all to her. Out of the plenitude of your goodness and mercy undo a wrong unworthy of your exalted station.

HENRY

Rare sentiments to be suckled from the treacherous breasts of Nordheim!

OTTO

(*Who has come down; raising Raimond*) Words unbecoming the son of the third Henry, whose life these arms saved at Lindenham.

HENRY

And with ingratitude requites the offspring for the favors of the sire.

MILDRED

(*To Raimond*) Why have you come to add to my misery? (*He seats her R. and remains with her*)

HENRY

(*To Otto*) We accord you hearing, speak!

OTTO

To these youthful prayers I add mine.

HENRY

Refused!

OTTO

If language, having spring in the deepest wells of affection, can touch the chord of imperial magnanimity, I press, urge, beseech for these tender ones who, like stricken mourners by an open grave, await the sepulture of hopes and happiness.

HENRY

If it be so, it is so appointed. No more of it. Have you aught else?

OTTO

(*Emphatic*) Much! The priests and people of Nordheim memorialize that Elfred be not consecrated bishop 'till Rome has spoken.

HENRY

Obstinate serfs!

OTTO

The appointment is scandal that harbors dissension.

HENRY

Present the document that it may be forwarded to the master of public floggings.

OTTO

If for that only, I'll retain it for use elsewhere.

HENRY

Does Elfred not satisfy the swine?

OTTO

Briars do not yield lilies. A corrupt priest cannot bestow lustre on a mitre or authority to a crozier.

HENRY

You question our right of investiture?

OTTO

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

HENRY

We give it memory! Have you completed the measure of your insolence?

OTTO

Sweesig is being devastated by minions, acting in your name, without inquisition or warrant of intrusion.

HENRY

The overzeal of some of our adherents.

OTTO

Monasteries echo the ruthless tread of mailed despoiler, women flee and hide the ravisher's ghoulish desire, the right of sanctuary is violated, temples profaned, altars defiled, tabernacles rifled for ornaments to deck the strumpets of satraps' seraglios.

HENRY

Tiresome! What is it all to me?

OTTO

I am their overlord, you are mine. They look to me for protection; in turn, I look to you.

HENRY

Serfs! Dare they, dare you impeach our administration? Into their witless pates drive the certainty: We are King and Emperor by right divine!

OTTO

Rather, because you are the first begotten of the loins of your father — and by the will of the people.

HENRY

Sedition! Demagoguery!

OTTO

Custom immemorial, prescription sprung from the womb of time, may blunt perception, but does not stifle the voice of equity or abrogate the rights of man.

HENRY

(*Disgust*) Platitude!

OTTO

Only the patient searcher locates origins; only to the dreamer is vouched visions of possibilities.

HENRY

Your mind's diseased!

OTTO

My liege, it requires no prophetic gift to ken when age, hoary in evolution and revolution, shall hear the brazen tongue of Liberty's loud mouth bell proclaim: Government derives its power from the consent of the governed.

HENRY

(*Approaching and drawing gauntlet from belt*) That brain of yours shelters treason and harbors —

OTTO

Nay, not so. I am untutored in dissembler's art; I have no disguise to conceal opinions which from conviction take on form.

HENRY

Our answer! (*Strikes him in face with gauntlet. Otto evinces great, suppressed emotion. Raimond, standing to his R. attempts to draw sword. Otto, without looking at him, catches his wrist*) Godfrey! Conrad! The rest to our cortege! (*Exeunt his followers and Hermann's retainers*) Monk, lead the way. We would make an inventory of the treasure these walls enclose. (*Exit Anselm into abbey, followed by Godfrey, Conrad and Henry*)

OTTO

(*Breast heaving*) 'Tis well for him he is King, else that blow had been his last!

RAIMOND

Father, your grasp gives me pain.

OTTO

(*Dropping his wrist*) Forgive me, child. Child no longer! The joy and hope of my house. To steed, make free use of spur, nor cease dispatch till you have sounded the tocsin in Nordheim!

RAIMOND

You, whither?

OTTO

Rome! Rome, to unfold the truth to the Sovereign Pontiff; to pray absolution from the oath that binds me

to allegiance. Then, then shall Henry know the might of injured right, the o'erwhelming power of a people's will! (*Exits with rapid stride L.*)

RAIMOND

(*At U. R. calls off*) Mark, quick, I await my horse! Haste, I tell you, for I must away to prepare the chivalry of Nordheim to breast the tempest and avenge an insult! (*Seeing Henry, Godfrey and Conrad enter from abbey, he stands behind a convenient buttress of the building.*)

HENRY

(*Laughing*) Still, not sufficient to satisfy the rapacity of my faithful Clodel . . .

Enter CHEVALIER, *R.*

Well, what now?

CHEVALIER

(*Advances, kneels and hands a scroll to Henry*) To the liege lord, Henry, from the Vatican. (*Stands*)

HENRY

Ah, perhaps he relents — has had discretion for a visitor. (*Breaks seal and silently reads*) Fiends of hell, another insult! (*Running his eye over the communication*) "Vetoes Elfred as bishop of Nordheim . . . deprives him of priestly faculties . . . denounces simony, investiture . . . penalties . . . summonses Guibert to be disciplined . . . complaints . . . loath to rebuke . . . solicitous for our salvation . . . seal of fisherman . . . Gregory, PP. VII." We stay not long on the shivering

edge of suspense. Guibert disgraced, Nordheim itching for rebellion, the monk of Cluny dictates — dictates to us! Here, flunky, this to the pettifogging priest of priests! (*Throws away scroll*) Tell him his parchment has gone on winds to supply intellectual repast for jackals; that the low cunning and black-art he employs to ensnare men and with which he kept Pope Nicholas like an ass in a stable is harmless against the strong winged, broad winged eagles of Germany and Rome! Begone! (*Exit Chevalier R.*) The third within a month! Insufferable! Had ever monarch such a motley crew about him? Where's the Macedonian courage that should rid us of besetting tyranny?

GODFREY

(*Draws sword*) To it this sword is dedicated!

CONRAD

(*Draws sword*) And this is consecrated!

HENRY

(*Draws sword and crosses theirs*) Bravely spoken! Let not promise grow stale for execution. We follow, and on Campania's plain elect a pontiff amenable to our paramount pleasure. (*Godfrey and Conrad in unison with him*) Death to Hildebrand! Hail Guibert of Ravenna!

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

A ROOM IN THE VATICAN. Gothic interior. Doors down R. and L. On the upper side of each door is part of a column, sufficient to conceal a person standing behind it. Above, on R., a door (French window) opening to balcony, overlooking a court; a small seat temporarily in window-opening. In rear wall a large stained-glass window depicting three life-sized angels holding aloft flaming swords. No light behind this window — the dead effect of a church window at night when the interior is lighted.

Gregory is discovered standing at open window, his left hand resting on back of seat; Dolmino, also standing, a few feet away.

As curtain rises voices are heard from the court singing:

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes; laudate eum, omnes populi.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people.

Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus: et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

For his mercy is confirmed upon us: and the truth of the Lord remaineth forever.

When singing has ceased Gregory raises his right hand and blesses the people who cheer and are supposed to disperse.

GREGORY

(*Turning to Dolmino*) God bless them! They are good people. If politicians — ah, me, perhaps it were well not

to touch the unwholesome with uncovered hands. They cheer! It flatters the streak of vanity in most, if not all of us: an outcropping in many; a deep stratum in others, but there nevertheless. Sinful, of course, but . . . A token of affection! It gratifies; solace for many an anxious hour!

DOLMINO

Why not acclaim you? Would you have favor insensible to gratitude? You have opened schools, emancipated serfs, sheltered weaklings and given the States the best of governments. You have healed the sick, restored sight to the blind and even, it is said, quickened the dead.

GREGORY

Not I — the Master — Peter and John going up to the temple! Somehow, this generous outpouring of love and veneration makes me apprehensive. Only four short days, remember, between the palm and the cross — from "Hosanna" to "Crucify Him!"

DOLMINO

Banish, I beseech you, such oppressive thoughts.

GREGORY

(*Sits. Slight cough*) This cough annoys more frequently. I have a premonition, because I love justice and hate iniquity, I shall die in exile.

DOLMINO

In exile, Holy Father, thou canst not die, for "He hath given thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the utmost bounds of the earth for thy possessions."

GREGORY

Of late my rest has been disturbed by disquieting dreams — realistic, compelling, abiding. I saw William and Dietrich — to me personally unknown — sons of the late Count Gero, with inflexible determination and the glow of conquest writ on countenance, sweep on to victory after victory, while multitudes flocked to their standards and Henry, the king, precipitately fled before them. Then, in the woods of Antwerp, Godfrey of Lorraine, spouse of our daughter Matilda —

DOLMINO

He who vaingloriously boasted he would lead another pope, Henry's appointee, triumphantly to Rome?

GREGORY

The same. But now, in my vision, done to death by an enemy's dagger.

DOLMINO

The punishment of God is certain; though sometimes, to our finite comprehension, His messengers have heavy feet.

GREGORY

The last, most horrible of all: The cathedral church of William of Utrecht blasted, like the accursed cities of old; and the profane and irreverent prelate himself, afflicted with sudden loathsome disease, in the throes of his last agony, going to the grave and judgment with imprecations on his lips, refusing to be shriven, reviling his Maker and, in all the terrors of remorse, proclaiming his own eternal damnation.

DOLMINO

(*Subtly*) Perchance, it is the human agency employed by the Holy Spirit to awaken to the urgent necessity of dealing with the King and his satellites.

GREGORY

What, still harping on that subject?

DOLMINO

(*Sadly*) You were not slow to rebuke when you were Hildebrand.

GREGORY

Ideals without responsibility, like the enthusiasms of life's early morning, are wonderful; with it — ah well, that is otherwise. Atlas to carry the earth must preserve its equilibrium.

DOLMINO

Henry's latest is an imperative, impudent demand for Imperial coronation.

GREGORY

For that, at least — and it is the greatest — he is beholden to us and must petition. Methinks, holy chrism will never confirm the crown of Charlemagne on the brow of a profligate. He must mend his ways.

DOLMINO

"The desire of the wicked shall perish." He daily grows in iniquity —

GREGORY

(*Chidingly, half playful*) My dear cardinal, set a watch around thy mouth, and a door around thy lips, that thy heart may not incline to — er — uncharitableness.

DOLMINO

I do not wish to importune; sometimes, I fear, my words are open to implications of which there is no intention.

GREGORY

(*Drily*) Do not disparage yourself, beloved brother. Believe us, our will is not weak. We judge his acts as born of youth's impulsiveness. Then his mother — we must not forget the sainted Agnes.

DOLMINO

I am described as calloused, but even my heart bleeds for her.

GREGORY

Henry makes fair promises.

DOLMINO

They are stillborn.

GREGORY

I have always had admiration for the Prodigal's father.

DOLMINO

Would there have been such if the parent had not spared the rod?

GREGORY

The rod! Ah, that should be the last resort; stubborn perversity alone justifies its use. Let us hope we may never have to wield it.

DOLMINO

While you hesitate, what happens? Heresy in religion, anarchy in administration, bishops named and inducted over whom your authority at best is nominal. You order; the King countermands. The laity are shocked, moral apathy roots and faith is endangered.

GREGORY

(*Good-naturedly*) Pious zeal, I fear me, does sometimes exaggerate!

DOLMINO

If it does — there — I have nothing more to add — I hold my peace.

GREGORY

At least acquaint us with the remedy you would adopt.

DOLMINO

Discipline; iron, resolute chastisement! "He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble."

GREGORY

Yes, I see; but then — you are not pope.

DOLMINO

Heaven forefend!

GREGORY

Is the time opportune for what you advise?

DOLMINO

The measure of God's time is an ever present day!

GREGORY

But we are mortals.

DOLMINO

"He hath showed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart."

GREGORY

It causes me, I confess, sleepless nights and prayerful hours. I am overlooking nothing and forgetting nothing. God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. I would be truly humble before I became his harsh, unrelenting judge. Ah, me, we go sorrowful while the enemy afflicteth us!

DOLMINO

You are too compassionate!

GREGORY

Dolmino, I did not seek the government of the Church; I was called to it against my will. Of this, Our Lady, the Mother of God, with my brother the blessed Paul and the whole celestial hierarchy bear witness. The August One who knows all, knows I would sooner finish my life a wanderer than use the seat in a worldly spirit

and for earthly glory. My great desire, my ambition, is to reign in peace and unity according to the Divine Will; but I would scorn myself if, swayed by menaces or cowardly purchasing a temporary advantage, I compromised a single principle of which I am the unworthy custodian.

DOLMINO

(*Elated*) You are that Hildebrand, the same Hildebrand who prevented the usurpation of Bruno of Toul!

GREGORY

Bruno was a saint! Henry's unseemly infatuations blind: he does not realize that one by one his allies desert him, the churchman gradually divorces himself from the influence of state and his subjects' murmurs unfold into menaces. To the most casual, all signs are portents of his disaster. (*Rising*) You think me laggard —

DOLMINO

Your policy has certainly been fruitful: the foresight, depth and breadth of wise statesmanship.

GREGORY

When the first part of my dream becomes reality; when Saxon martydom inspires and Saxon fires light the torch for Freedom's way; when Henry's throne teeters, then, unless his heart is truly contrite, I will call upon the Lord and "He will show forth to his people the power of his works!" (*Coughing drops back into seat*)

Enter CHEVALIER, *L.*

CHEVALIER

(*Kneeling before Gregory*) Most Holy Father, my mission is accomplished.

GREGORY

Arise. His answer?

CHEVALIER

(*Stands*) He gave none — that is, in writing.

DOLMINO

More disrespect! Had he no speech?

CHEVALIER

He called me a flunky.

GREGORY

(*Grave, dry humor*) That goes too far, indeed. But of us, what did he say?

CHEVALIER

It is better buried.

GREGORY

Nevertheless, we would hear it.

CHEVALIER

He spoke about the Monk of Cluny dictating — "dictates to us," were his words.

GREGORY

Monk of Cluny! Ah, how I wish I were!

CHEVALIER

He cast aside the packet with a speech about the — it was insolent — the priest of priests.

GREGORY

Poor fellow! Pride, pride! Does he think the human is above the divine? that the court which judges spiritual things shall not also adjudicate the things of earth?

DOLMINO

Is that all?

CHEVALIER

He was convulsed with passion and said many things I did not lay to memory.

DOLMINO

You are concealing something?

GREGORY

Speak, my son; it's best I know.

CHEVALIER

He said that the low cunning and black-art that ensnared men and kept Pope Nicholas like an ass in a stable —

GREGORY

(*Amused*) Ah, so he keeps in touch with current comment!

CHEVALIER

— was harmless against the eagles of Germany and Rome.

GREGORY

He has not yet the insignia of empire, and my prophetic instinct kens he never shall. That will do. Retire. (*Exit Chevalier, L.*)

DOLMINO

Now, are you convinced?

GREGORY

The ass in the stable — that was good! Who would expect it from the young reprobate?

DOLMINO

Pardon. It is hardly a matter for levity. It is glaring, outrageous insult — contempt, contumacy! You might ignore it personally, but not the defiance to your exalted station.

GREGORY

There is no gainsaying that! Our fathers have not seen or heard, and sacred historians do not record at any time to have emanated from pagans or heretics this boldness which blasphemes the Lord in the blessed Peter. Incline unto my aid, O God, and lend me strength, spiritual and physical, to meet the issue. It is apparent we may no longer patronize or resist the dictates of duty. Ah me, the struggle will be intense unto white-heat, galling to the Lucifer-like pride of the Franconian.

Enter CHEVALIER, *L.*

CHEVALIER

Most Holy Father, Baron Otto of Nordheim and the Abbot Anselm of Limwenlock crave urgent audience.

DOLMINO

At this unusual hour? Impossible. Name them two hours after mid-day.

GREGORY

Nay, nay, they are the ambassadors of the King. Already Henry repents his acts. Ceremony is waived. Let them enter. (*Chevalier retires L.*)

DOLMINO

Contrition hot on the heels of insubordination! The wolf in the garb of the lamb!

GREGORY

No, it is Providential grace.

Enter OTTO *and* ANSELM, *L. They kneel and kiss Gregory's hand.*

OTTO

Most Holy Father, we crave your blessing.

GREGORY

Arise, my sons. (*They stand*) Your presence rejoices us. You bear the gift of Henry's sincere, if late, submission?

OTTO

Alas, no.

GREGORY

No?

OTTO

Sincerely do I regret that it is not my felicity to bring consolation to the shepherd's heart. I have come to supplicate decree divorcing allegiance wedded to remorseless tyrant; to beseech a fatherly benediction on a struggle for the liberties of my distracted country.

GREGORY

Truly the burden of the day is heavy! Joy was the expected guest; sorrow comes in his stead.

OTTO

Would that word or act of mine could banish it.

GREGORY

(*Resignedly*) Ah, well! What facts and reasons support your unusual behest?

OTTO

The same that from creation's daylight despotism has put into the mouth of its victim.

GREGORY

Henry is a plant of rank growth. Tending, pruning, training avail naught.

OTTO

He claims, not alone to rule, but to enslave by right divine. He confines the person of the Princess Mildred of

Bavaria, niece and ward of the saintly Hubert, archbishop of that see, under compulsion to mate with Godfrey of Sudermann.

GREGORY

Has she valid reason for objecting to the union?

OTTO

She is affianced to another — my son.

GREGORY

Personal interest! Hardly sufficient to justify your extraordinary request or the measure you contemplate.

OTTO

Injured right has no personality; the particle denied justice affects and menaces the whole. Were more needed: She is to be immolated and her wealth sacrificed to the cupidity of this suitor, because so pledged by the king, as a reward for compassing the death of the Empress.

GREGORY

Stop! Son, knowest what you say? The charge is wild — mad! Insanity alone could give it tongue or credence.

ANSELM

I support it without reservation — I know.

GREGORY

The depravity — the sin — oh!

OTTO

I took him memorial, signed by priests and people of Nordheim, protesting Elfred's elevation to the episcopacy —

GREGORY

And —

OTTO

Declined to receive it — jested it to scorn — wanted the subscribers' names to send their persons to the flogging post.

GREGORY

Yes, and you —

OTTO

Refused.

GREGORY

From the unjust and deceitful man, deliver us! Go on.

OTTO

Marauders pillage our lands; lust and rapine are tolerated and protected as when Nero defiled a throne in this imperial city; our convents and monasteries are not sacred from ruthless invasion; sanctuary is violated; there is sacrilege in the temple; virtue is mocked and without refuge; the valuables of the Church are confiscated and transmuted into gauds to requite lechery!

GREGORY

Crimes monstrous in their immensity!

ANSELM

The statement swerves not the thickness of a grass blade from the truth.

GREGORY

I charge you: spring these accusations from motives disinterested?

ANSELM

On my part, born of the Church's and a nation's agony.

GREGORY

(*To Otto*) And you, my son?

OTTO

Rancour adds no fuel to wrath's blazing pyre. Yet, as I am a sinful man, do I confess that personal indignity applied the torch. With fair speech and respectful mien I spread before Henry the grievances that sued relief. For answer, he smote me on the face. Then broke loose, and in wild deluge gushed up, those fountains of passion in the human breast that lend sacramental unction to the consecration of divine purpose — then, then I became the avenger, not of my own, but of my country's wrongs!

GREGORY

Unheard of crimes! (*Rises*) Enough! The audience is ended. To our council chamber repair when comes the mid-day hour. You will then learn our decision. (*Otto and Anselm retire bowing, L.*)

DOLMINO

Ghastly reality has consumed hope. There is but one orb luminous enough to penetrate the darkness; one voice potent enough to summon the dead to life. Both in one do centre. It cannot, dare not betray its trust as the Keeper of the Keys!

GREGORY

True! The contempt and injury of myself I forgive; but those against Our Lord, His Mother, His Apostles and the communion of saints demand expiation. The moment of action has arrived despite our patient endeavor; terrible words, at the sound of which angels weep and powers of darkness rejoice, must be spoken. What we bind shall be bound — (*Breaks into violent fit of coughing*) Assist me; I am very feeble, very —

DOLMINO

Courage, fortitude, strength! "The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion: rule though in the midst of thy enemies."

GREGORY

(*Recovering*) You are right! It is no time for bodily infirmity. It is the appointed moment to be about my Father's business — for daring, drastic deed! Let him beware who thinks the Church the worthless bondwoman of the kings of the earth! "The Lord at thy right hand hath broken kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among nations, he shall fill ruins, he shall crush the

heads in the land of many." Lead me. I am — Hildebrand! (*Exits following Dolmino, R.*)

Enter GODFREY *and* CONRAD, *with drawn swords, stealthily L.*

GODFREY

Fortune favors.

CONRAD

The dolt of a guard who gave credence to our word little recked the eminent service he loaned to vast emprise.

GODFREY

Conceal yourself yonder. (*Godfrey hides behind column R., Conrad, L.*)

Enter GREGORY, *R.*

(*Godfrey emerges from behind column, takes a step in advance towards Gregory, stops as if attention arrested, furtively looks over balcony, quickly retreats behind column. Raimond, with unsheathed sword in hand, is seen climbing over balcony railing.*)

RAIMOND *enters hurriedly by window.*

GREGORY

(*Turns, startled*) What means it? This mode of entry — this intrusion? Speak, stranger! In our presence with bloodstained sword!

RAIMOND

Thank God, I'm in time to save you! I have outraced death — the messenger of your assassination!

GREGORY

Incomprehensible! Is the madhouse loose?

RAIMOND

Heed me, Holy Father! Days, not many in number, have gone since Godfrey, Count of Sudermann, and Conrad, Margrave of Erchstedt, departed Limwenlock, under oath to the Emperor, vowed to your death.

GREGORY

Mine?

RAIMOND

Aye, yours! I overheard and, with speed that hardly paused for rest, gathered the clans of Nordheim. They are not five leagues distant. Fearful, lest the foul deed outdo me, I pressed hither.

GREGORY

You must — you surely are mistaken!

RAIMOND

Even now, on the Campania, floats the Black Eagle; Henry raises a stately pavilion in which to elect your successor; the unfrocked of Ravenna is destined for the Lateran throne.

GREGORY

Is it so? (*Cryptically and measuredly*) What saith the Royal Psalmist? "The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord; nor any of them that go down to hell."

RAIMOND

My approach was seen and two minions dispatched to intercept —

GREGORY

And, by God's goodness, failed!

RAIMOND

Pray for them, they have need of it.

GREGORY

You have acted with true nobility. Here and hereafter your fidelity will be rewarded. I go for a walk; accompany me. I would learn more from you — of the details. But put aside the sword. The favored Peter was rebuked for using it.

RAIMOND

I would keep it; it may still be a faithful friend.

GREGORY

No, not here.

RAIMOND

Depravity may penetrate even —

GREGORY

(*Chidingly*) Our behests are usually considered —

RAIMOND

Commands. I obey. (*Takes off sword and stands it in U. L. corner*) But should they come —

GREGORY

Heard you not of the Christmas eve night when Cenci, the Tusculum, invaded the church of St. Maria Maggiore, tore us from the altar, wounded and made us prisoner?

RAIMOND

No.

GREGORY

The same Mercy that then preserved us; the same Power that guided the random sent dart to the throat of the ruffian adherent about to strike off our head, will again deliver us from evil if it be Its holy will we should longer serve. (*He is now up C.; Raimond up L.*)

RAIMOND

It is — (*Has turned; sees Godfrey and Conrad, who have emerged from their respective concealments and are menacingly converging on Gregory*) Look, Holy Father! Look, see, they are here!

GREGORY

(*Turns quickly and draws himself up defiantly*) Strike! I am ready. Strike an old man and release him to glory. (*They hesitate*) Well, I await; why do you hesitate? (*They raise swords; Gregory drops on one knee with arms outstretched*) Strike! Slay the PRINCE OF THE APOSTLES and the WORD MADE FLESH! (*Sudden darkness — all lights out. Lights up behind Gothic window; all parts of the window are opaque except the figures of the angels; they now stand out as if animated and hovering in protection over Gregory. Spot light on Gregory. Godfrey and Conrad, with shrieks of terror, rush off respectively R. and L.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

EMPEROR'S PAVILION. A large and gorgeous marquee interior, full stage, cyclorama setting. Door C., hung with curtains and backed by scene representing the Campania. Dais, with throne, up L. C. Wide aisle C., with seats on both sides. Rugs, banners and other evidences of splendor.

DISCOVERED: Harold lying asleep on dais; Clodel sitting opposite, but a little below; Bertha and Mildred down R.; Mary and Felix down L. All in an abstracted mood. A short silence after raise of curtain.

CLODEL

What's the office, matins or vespers? (*Pause*) Oh, it's a requiem, is it? (*Pause*) Did anyone declaim? Possibly my hearing has been affected by the Italian miasma. (*Pause*) Dear me, what a distracting, clamorous hubbub! (*The others ignore her*)

MARY

(*To Felix*) Your thoughts, Sir Absentmind?

FELIX

Weighty: the length of Henry's memory.

MARY

A truce to that! Let's live and be merry while we may.

FELIX

Yes, but you see, personally, I do not favor early demise.

MARY

Take courage, the King's anger is generally shortlived — in inverse ratio to its vehemence; much of it, like Gorgon Medusa, is fable to tame unruly children.

FELIX

Henry is no fable and a headless trunk is not pleasant speculation.

MARY

Then dismiss it from mind until near danger of it compels attention. . . . Poor Mildred, she is the one who is heavily burdened — walks the *via dolorosa*.

FELIX

(*Points off L.*) There is her haven — if there be one.

MARY

Where?

FELIX

There, where a cross marks the habitation of Peter. (*They rise and stroll off L.*)

BERTHA

It is oppressive, I suffocate —

MILDRED

Let us go into the open. (*Both rise*) God's light has a soothing effect; it is the antagonist of disquieting reflection. (*They exit R.*)

CLODEL

(*Sarcastically*) Hell!

HAROLD

(*Wakes and sits up*) Yes, it's hot.

CLODEL

What do you mean?

HAROLD

The place you mentioned, of course.

CLODEL

The blood of this human kettle is boiling; soon it will boil over and someone will be badly scalded.

HAROLD

As serious as all that?

CLODEL

If the pleasure-loving Franconian thinks I will endure the contempt of his so-called wife and the insolence of her dependents, he will have a rude awakening.

HAROLD

Take care the shock is not yours. Henry has a summary disposition, as perhaps you have noticed. I

speak with knowledge, having been with him for years. He lacks constancy — has a most reprehensible habit of tiring of toys.

CLODEL

(*Snappy*) Do you class me a toy?

HAROLD

A most beautiful one; animated but — but, possibly, *passé*.

CLODEL

(*Jumps up in anger*) Fool!

HAROLD

You have the name correctly.

CLODEL

What are you hinting at?

HAROLD

Passports! Safe conduct, retirement and penitential meditation for one who has served the state!

CLODEL

I'll have you whipped.

HAROLD

You never knew a jester to be punished. We are a royalty — minor, to be sure — but royalty nevertheless; ours, an inherited gift. My father, his father — all the

grandfathers — have reigned in turn. To dethrone us would leave the court without — no, with one less fool.

CLODEL

I'll to the King —

HAROLD

And invite rebuff? Have a care. In his present frame of mind he is more than apt to be ugly. "The Emperor is not to be disturbed." Such were the orders. To disregard them, a fool would not dare; a quadruped, braying to have pulled down the ladder it had mounted, might.

CLODEL

I concede, you understand his humors.

HAROLD

I should. I know when to anticipate — a kick. Be seated and unravel your troubles. The kettle blows up if there is no vent for the vapor.

CLODEL

(*Somewhat mollified, reluctantly sits*) Why do we stagnate here?

HAROLD

Royal pleasure — perhaps.

CLODEL

I asked Henry and he nearly bit off my head.

HAROLD

(*Sarcastic*) Unimpressible?

CLODEL

(*Doubtful*) Eh?

HAROLD

(*Airily*) Nothing.

CLODEL

He was cross, irritable —

HAROLD

Snap and schnapps!

CLODEL

He *has* been drinking over much. We caroused last night and retired late.

HAROLD

Muddy mouth, dirty words — expected! What's the concrete tribulation? There's nothing here to covet and convert.

CLODEL

That's just it. Yesterday, he promised we would continue our march at daybreak. I'm so anxious to visit Rome! It is now mid-day and we have not moved, nor is there sign of it. Moreover, I heard it said that he was going to send all the women — me included — me! — back home.

HAROLD

No surprise! Cause and effect! Unconsciously you are the former. Early this morning he had a most delightful letter —

CLODEL

(*Suspicious*) From a woman?

HAROLD

Certainly; otherwise, where the piquancy?

CLODEL

God, if I get my hands on her! What's she like?

HAROLD

The richest, best educated and most beautiful in the world.

CLODEL

Surpassing me?

HAROLD

Report has it so.

CLODEL

No, no, it cannot be. I've been told — have you ever seen a face handsomer than mine?

HAROLD

(*Cynically*) I am not an artist.

CLODEL

Or a figure?

HAROLD

The proverbial cat has advantages.

CLODEL

(*Stands*) Judge for yourself!

HAROLD

I am not a Greek . . . The letter was discovered neatly wrapped about an arrow that had been sped from some vantage point, by wary messenger, into the flap of Henry's tent.

CLODEL

Who is she? What's her name?

HAROLD

Matilda, Countess of Canossa.

CLODEL

I'll seek her as we return!

HAROLD

(*Rises*) Too jeopardizing! Matilda is a prude and inclined to be drastic. She'd have you make an altogether unnecessary display of your attractions; ornament you with pitch and plume and have you escorted through the highways by heralds announcing: "Behold the splendor of a royal bawd!"

CLODEL

(*Great passion*) Good God! You dare, you — you — you—

HAROLD

Calm yourself and you'll hear the contents of the epistle: "Henry," it was quite so abrupt. "Henry, if

you dare profane the Eternal City and affront the Holy See with your own and your concubine's" — do you recognize the allusion? — "concubine's presence, you will never recross the Alps. Matilda." Brief and to the point!

CLODEL

The she-devil! Ha, ha, ha! (*Strained laughter*) She cannot intimidate us; Henry will punish her insolence.

HAROLD

He'll try — sometime — not immediately. He knows, you do not, the Tuscans' terrible war cry: "St. Peter and Matilda!"

CLODEL

When he hears me —

HAROLD

He will never hear you. He's heard too much of you. It accounts for his mood, words and over-indulgence. (*At C. D.*) And, my charmer, I had not disclosed this much were I not aware that the fiat has gone forth for your beatific translation to the paradise of — of discarded merry-andrews. (*Exits C. D.*)

CLODEL

(*In dread fear, gasps*) God! (*Stumbles into seat R. C. and drops her head on her arms, which are over the back of a seat*)

Re-enter HAROLD, *backing, C. D., followed by* ANHALT.

ANHALT

(*Announces*) T-t-the Ar-r-rchduke of B-b-bremen!

HAROLD

Write it down on the scullery floor,
Our feast's augmented by one more bore

ANHALT

As-s-sinine j-j-joke!

HAROLD

My, my, when you stutter,
Does your heart go aflutter?

ANHALT

B-b-beast! (*Exits C. D.*)

Enter HERMANN, *C. D.*

HERMANN

Imbecile, knowest thou the whereabouts of the gallant Baron of Nordheim?

HAROLD

The functionary fool has not enlightenment surpassing that of the innate fool. Seek elsewhere! (*Goes off R.*)

HERMANN

Of all the useless — I'll have him to the pillory! (*Follows off R.*)

Enter HENRY, *C. D., flushed with wine, but not drunk; only an occasional thickness of speech discloses that he has taken too much.*

HENRY

Zither, man, hi, wine! Be quick about it for we have much that demands attention.

CLODEL

(*Rises*) Henry!

HENRY

What are you doing here? Were you not notified that the Queen and her suite return with dispatch to our kingdom?

CLODEL

I am not of hers.

HENRY

You go, nevertheless — all women!

CLODEL

I can't part from you; it would break my heart.

HENRY

It is necessary.

CLODEL

Let me stay. I alone can comfort you — bear with you the burdens — minister to you. I beseech —

HENRY

You go with the rest. It's final.

CLODEL

Do you no longer love me? Have you —

HENRY

Our whole attention can't be occupied with your whims.

CLODEL

(*Weeping*) If not my pleading, perhaps the tears wrung —

HENRY

Stop!

CLODEL

It is true — true, as they said! (*Bitterly*) You have ceased to love me. I know it, I can see it!

HENRY

Don't play the droll, it's not becoming. The present is no time for dallying in the lap of pleasance.

CLODEL

It is that wretched letter! I know —

HENRY

(*Quickly seizes her*) What letter? Speak! To what letter do you refer?

CLODEL

From the Countess—

HENRY

Who told you of it? His name? Quickly or, by Satan's shadow, you and your informant shall hang together. The name?

CLODEL

H-h-h — I — I —

HENRY

Out with it!

CLODEL

I saw it lying on your couch.

HENRY

(*Relieved*) And read, of course?

CLODEL

I am a woman.

HENRY

See that you have no woman's tongue. I would not be the laughing stock of nations.

CLODEL

And you'll let me stay?

HENRY

No! You have your orders.

CLODEL

(*Throws arms about him*) As you love me! As I love you! By all we have been to each other, you must, you shall —

HENRY

(*Disengages her arms and throws her into seat*) Cease! I am tired of nonsense! (*As he goes off and exits L.*) Knave, did you hear, the wine!

CLODEL

(*Jumps up, furious; starts after him*) No (*halts*), what's the use? The clown was wise for he conferred with truth. (*Turns and faces R.*) It is the end. (*Walks slowly and de-*

jectedly to R.; straightens up, throws back shoulders with reckless bravado, and exits R.)

Enter RAIMOND, *C. D.* and HUBERT, *L.*

RAIMOND

Salutation, your Grace. Know you aught of my sire?

HUBERT

Otto made no addition to our company.

RAIMOND

He departed and waited not for you. This much I do know, he has this day been in Rome. I have astounding intelligence.

HUBERT

These be strange times. Confounding happenings seem but pebbles making ripple on the placid surface of serenity.

RAIMOND

But mine, in immensity, so o'ertops that it hath no precedent since Lucifer flung defiance at Godhead. With me, and I'll relate. (*Exeunt L.*)

Enter OTTO *and* HERMANN, *R.*

OTTO

It leaves me speechless.

HERMANN

I do not discredit my own senses, I heard it from the hallway of the monastery. I feel certain your son also heard it.

OTTO

Then I do not await for dispensation. Henry's act the blow that severs allegiance. Retribution is the dictate of Justice.

HERMANN

In the crisis, Bremen stands by Nordheim.

OTTO

Attend to it that in reality Henry may review your cohorts.

HERMANN

Gad, he shall, for they are close at hand.

OTTO

I'll to the Vatican to save, if possible —

Enter RAIMOND *and* HUBERT, *L.*

RAIMOND

It would be to no purpose.

OTTO

Son, you here?

RAIMOND

In exigency and confusion, with none to consult, I followed what my judgment did dictate. The legions of Nordheim are very near this imperial lodge. I was in time to warn Gregory.

OTTO

And save him?

RAIMOND

I did not save him.

OTTO *and* HERMANN, *simultaneously*

Dead!

RAIMOND

No; but my arm not his salvation.

OTTO

Whose the —

RAIMOND

Omnipotence! In the richest ripeness of Satanic project they were foiled with a breath. Father, let us seek seclusion. I would speak with you. (*Goes off R. with Otto*)

HERMANN

(*Going to seat back row R.*) There is wrath in wind and on water. (*Bugle note heard without*)

HUBERT

(*Going to seat back row L.*) Miracles did not cease with the Apostles.

Enter C. D., TRUMPETERS, BANNER-BEARERS, HAROLD, BERTHA, MILDRED, MARY, CLODEL, FELIX, ANHALT, COURTIERS, BISHOPS, MONKS, SOLDIERS, *etc.*

Enter L., GUIBERT, HENRY *and* ZITHER, *followed by* PAGES *and* RETAINERS. *Henry is clad in robes of state and wears the green mantle of the Roman Emperor.*

He ascends the throne, Guibert on his R., Zither on L. The latter bears a flagon of wine and goblet; from time to time Henry sips from it.

HENRY

A reception and greeting to our beloved council. (*Sits*)

OMNES

Long live the King! (*They take appointed places, sitting or standing, leaving entrances clear*)

HENRY

It is with feelings of sadness, but always with reverent submission to Divine Will, we announce the imminent demise of the Bishop of Rome.

OMNES

(*Surprise*) The Pope!

HENRY

It lives in memory, no doubt, that on the death of Alexander II, Hildebrand, in defiance of custom and unmindful of our sacred prerogatives, secured election of himself and assumed office without our sanction. (*Assent from some*) Not wishing to disturb peace or endanger religion, we did, for the time, neither give nor withold approval. (*Several voices:* "'*Tis so!*") Jealous of the rights that, by ordination of the Most High, we hold in trust for you, and as against the possibility of still another illegal encroachment, we, in our prudence, have you convoked so that your wisdom may be exerted to preserve au-

thority; and further, with that object in view, to name one among you possessing the qualities of mind and body essential to a dignified and illustrious pontificate. (*One or two voices faintly: "Guibert! Guibert!" Henry smiles ingratiatingly*) Give volume to your words! We wait but the sad intelligence —

HERMANN

(*Rises*) My liege, dare I, without reflection on your utterance, question the accuracy of your information?

HENRY

(*Snappily*) If you have the temerity.

HERMANN

If, in my desire for exactness, I blunder —

HENRY

You will not be recreant to your record.

HERMANN

Whoso imparted the intelligence to your Majesty was unreliable. He —

HENRY

Sir!

HERMANN

I have voucher beyond suspicion from one who but recently held converse with His Holiness, who was then in the enjoyment of his wonted health.

HENRY

Have a care!

HERMANN

I have; on my soul, I have! Never cat more cautious cros sing stream.

HENRY

A cloistered tongue —

HERMANN

I am not so bold as to correct you. I would but withdraw from currency a falsehood circulated by deception.

HENRY

Beware! Thy head the stake if —

HERMANN

Nay, Highness, I but speak for your advantage. My informant is the noble Baron of Nordheim.

HENRY

Nordheim here?

HERMANN

He did forestall our coming by some hours.

HENRY

'Sdeath! (*Seizes goblet and drains it*)

HERMANN

Having word so reliable, I were laggard to duty if —

HENRY

Peace, vassal!

HERMANN

Ah, yes — yes — (*Sits*)

Enter GODFREY *and* CONRAD, *C. D., in haste and disheveled. Drop on knees before throne.*

GODFREY *and* CONRAD, *simultaneously*

Sire!

HENRY

(*Rises*) Hildebrand is dead!

Enter RAIMOND, *R.*

RAIMOND

Hildebrand is not dead, on my honor as a man and soldier!

OMNES

Not dead?

RAIMOND

Whoso says he is, lies before Heaven! (*To Godfrey and Conrad*) Cravens, to your feet; tell of the miscarriage of your attempted dual crime — patricide and regicide.

OMNES

Crime, regicide!

HENRY

Up, speak!

GODFREY *and* CONRAD, *simultaneously*

We have failed.

HENRY

Eh? To your feet; tell of duty done! (*They rise*)

GODFREY

Everything happened as planned. We gained entrance, were secreted, then he (*indicating Raimond*) came to expose — for he had heard — and to thwart.

HENRY

By your side hung no steel for traitor's breast?

GODFREY

We bore upon them, intent to kill both. Suddenly the place was as dark as hooded night. For a moment we could discern nothing. Then — then —

HENRY

Yes, yes?

GODFREY

We — we saw — saw —

HENRY

Saw what?

CONRAD

What Attila saw when he faced the Great Leo at Mantua.

GODFREY

Angels — avenging angels with fiery swords! It was terrible — terrible —(*as he rushes out C. D.*) terrible —

CONRAD

And about the form of the Pontiff was a light — a light not of this world. (*Sinks wearily into a chair*)

HENRY

Satan's magic! Sorcery! Witchcraft! And your bowels turned to water!

RAIMOND

The visible act of an invisible God.

HENRY

Ho, guards, apprehend the traitor spawn of a traitor! To the dungeon, to the rack, to the executioner with him! (*Soldiers advance and seize Raimond*)

Enter OTTO, *R.*

OTTO

(*Level emotion*) Hearken unto me!

HENRY

The gods are good, they send us the brood of vipers!

OTTO

Henry of Franconia, the time has arrived for plain speech — and judgment.

HENRY

Your audaciousness — never mind — we will spare you — it would be an enormity to deprive the universe of its supreme mountebank. Ha, ha, ha! (*Drops into seat laughing*) By all the saints, it's good!

OTTO

Laugh while you may. The time is short. The hour glass has but a few sands in it.

HENRY

Ho, ho, Sedecias!

OTTO

The prototype is immaterial! Account for —

HENRY

To you?

OTTO

To the subjects you have outraged.

HENRY

Go on, go on; by my soul, this will kernel many a jest!

OTTO

I doubt you will be able to relish them.

HENRY

Do you beard us?

OTTO

Is there trace of halting palsy in my speech? Beard you? Oh, no, I am here to crush you.

HENRY

(*Jumping up*) This is majesty outraged! You and your brat shall perish together. Guards, all of you, rend them to pieces — food for raven and wolf-dog!

OTTO

Set curb to your speedy design, for it will never be executed. (*Points to R. and directs*) Pull down yon curtain! (*To Henry*) Behold! (*Turns to L. and directs*) And that also! (*To Henry*) Feast your eyes!

HENRY

(*Fearfully*) Our camp surrounded by legions in martial array!

OTTO

Discern the standards?

HENRY

Nordheim and Bremen!

HERMANN

Yes, yes, more of my stupid blundering. I understood you were anxious to behold them.

OTTO

Henry, I countermand your orders. (*To soldiers*) Fall back! (*They look from him to Henry and reluctantly retire*) If there are to be shambles to proclaim this a holiday, I'll provide the beeves.

HENRY

(*Drops into seat*) Your insolence is sublime. (*Laughs sarcastically and bitterly*) It is seed, however, that will yield rich harvest and — it will know the scythe. Sufficient! Whether Hildebrand be alive or dead, we are intent to elect another pope.

HERMANN

(*Rises*) I protest, I—

HENRY

Your seat! You are no longer of us. (*Hermann sits*)

HUBERT

(*Rises*) As one anointed of God, I raise —

HENRY

Silence!

HUBERT

Too long have I been so guilty. You claim, with sceptre, sword, ring and crozier, to confer baronial and episcopal dignity. My liege, you cannot make gift of that which you do not possess. They are Heaven's —

HENRY

And we Its appointed servant.

HUBERT

So be all — serf and sovereign. To but one —

HENRY

Hold your peace!

HUBERT

Be it so. I have made my profession. (*Sits*)

HENRY

(*Rises*) Let it be recorded as our official act, and let proclamation thereof be forthwith made, that we have named our loyal and faithful Guibert of Ravenna pope, under name of Clement III. (*Guibert rises, bows and sits*)

OMNES

Antipope! Antipope! We know him not!

HUBERT

(*Rises*) There is but one pope, Gregory! (*Sits*)

OMNES

Gregory! Gregory! Hildebrand is pope!

HENRY

Enough! His reign is of short duration. I, Henry, by merciful ordination of God, King and Emperor, deprive the betrayer Hildebrand of the office of pope, which he seems to possess, and command him to descend from the Apostolic See, the pontificate of which belongs to me by the grace of God and oath of the Romans! By all the power in me vested, I do now depose and make void — (*Deep and solemn toll of bell*) Why tolls that bell?

DOLMINO

(*Enters C. and stands in door. He has a black mourning scarf over his shoulders. He speaks quietly and gravely*) For your passing, Henry! Gregory has excommunicated you! Your name is anathema!

Lights out, thunder and lightning, the bell continues to toll at intervals to end of scene. Lights up sufficiently to disclose that stage has been deserted by all but Henry, some seats upset and indications of disorder.

HENRY

(*Kneeling on one knee down C., shivering and in great dread*) Alone, betrayed, lost — all is lost!

CURTAIN

ACT V

ACT V

SCENE 1. INNER COURT OF THE CHATEAU OF CANOSSA. Exterior Winter scene. The chateau painted drop hung in 3. Castellated stone wall, 8 ft. high, extending from R. to L. 2; archway passage near C.

DISCOVERED: Henry, his head and feet bare, clad in toga-like garment, standing, shivering and dejected, against wall. Snow falling and blowing in gusts on him; moaning wind; lights low; wind gradually dies down as lights go up; lights up full and wind and snow stop when dialogue commences. A guard with battle-axe on each side of archway. The guards do not speak, but lower their battle-axes and block Henry's repeated attempts to enter the archway.*

HENRY

(*To guards*) Good fellows, let me pass. Why are you so hard-hearted? For three days and three nights — not greater measured by time's pendulum, but infinitely longer by the hideousness borrowed from imagination — have I beaten path round these walls, yet they within do my presence ignore. I am famished; I am perishing with cold; I die if you do not take pity on me. (*Tries to pass; is repulsed*) Caitiffs, dogs, what mean you? There, there, Heaven pardon me, I do forget, I am no longer a master; I am lower than the lowest of serfs. Once I dispensed favors. (*Laughs*) Where are those who grovelled for a smile, pensioners of my bounty, panderers to my desires, opulent by my criminal contrivance? Where? Ask last

* See E. Swoiser's painting: HENRY IV AT CANOSSA

Winter's snows and last Summer's suns. (*Takes a turn across stage; back to archway; throws himself on his knees*) Open, open to the petitions of distress and compunction.

DOLMINO

(*Enters and stands in archway*) What quarrelsome hind makes discord?

HENRY

A moral leper.

DOLMINO

Seek your kind in a lazaretto.

HENRY

"I sink fast in the mire of the deep and there is no sure standing."

DOLMINO

Slime will not support slime.

HENRY

"Save me, O God: for the waters have come even unto my soul." I am a hunted beast; remorse, exceeding famished wolf, gnaws my vitals.

DOLMINO

Hungry he is, indeed, if he can stomach such carrion repast.

HENRY

"Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice."

DOLMINO

Keep that for your destined habitation. It may be a slight comfort there.

HENRY

"I am come unto the depths of the sea and a tempest hath overwhelmed me."

DOLMINO

Bah! Words, words — rote — and not yours. Who are you?

HENRY

Why do you ask? You know.

DOLMINO

Your name?

HENRY

Henry, Franconian king of Germany. (*Rises*)

DOLMINO

You foreswear! There is no king in Germany; for nigh a year the office has been vacant; we have accurate intelligence of the world's affairs in Rome. (*Turns and exits imperiously*)

HENRY

(*To guards*) Treated worse than a bondsman! Did you see? Scoffed, avoided as if I were a black-plague, denied speech by servants, food by peasants, water by children — deserted, abandoned, forsaken by all.

BERTHA

(*Who has entered R.*) Not by all, my dear one, not by all.

HENRY

(*Embracing her*) No, thank God, not by you. You had little cause to love me—

BERTHA

Happier days are in store for us.

HENRY

Were you as perfidious as the rest, famine and fever had long since glutted their appetites.

BERTHA

We must not forget what we owe the devotion of Felix Mildred and Mary.

HENRY

Mary! the only one who did not owe me hatred.

BERTHA

Our debt to them can never be paid. As for me, I am your wife. For better or worse was the promise; as I had hoped for the better, I accept the worse.

HENRY

Through the impenetrable gloom that encompassed me that awful day on the Campania, but one star shone to guide me — but one pilot for my soul's blindness — the light of your sympathy and affection.

BERTHA

I am going to the church, that you may pray by proxy.

HENRY

Aye, even the doors of God's house — all doors but the door to your heart are barred to me.

ANHALT

(*Heard singing off R.*)

When Ferdinand went a wooing,
Birds suspected there'd be cooing
And a heap of trouble brewing,
When Ferdinand went a wooing.

(*Enters R.*) 'F-F-F I c-c-could o-o-only s-s-speak as I sing!

HENRY

(*Kneels*) Let me kiss the hem of your garment. (*Does so*)

ANHALT

A-a-animated sca-a-arecrow!

HENRY

(*Rises*) Open your heart to pity.

ANHALT

D-d-d-d' ye k-k-know him?

HENRY

(*Angry*) Insolent! The stuttering lackey of a witless master!

ANHALT

He-e-e knew en-n-nough — (*Sees Bertha*) Your M-m-majesty!

BERTHA

Greeting, if it has aught of value.

ANHALT

M-m-my master —

BERTHA

The Archduke of Bremen?

ANHALT

— d-d-dispatched me with h-h-his r-r-respects —

BERTHA

We are very appreciative.

ANHALT

— and p-p-prays acceptance of t-t-the g-g-gifts the be-a-a-r-rers have without.

BERTHA

Tell your kind master it is beyond us to make return.

ANHALT

S-s-some del-l-licacies for you — that's a-a-all.

BERTHA

It is more — (*Affected; voice catches*)

ANHALT

Where s-s-shall we put 'e-e-em?

BERTHA

(*Pointing off R.*) In yonder tent. (*He exits; she bursts into tears*)

HENRY

Weep not, my dearest! Who'd think the old —

BERTHA

(*Emotionally*) Speak not, Henry; revile him not! You do not comprehend. I'll to the church and deluge heaven with prayers that your eyes be opened — that illumination be vouched you. (*Exits L.*)

Enter HAROLD, *R.; his jester costume is threadbare and torn.*

HENRY

(*Following Bertha a few paces*) Bertha! Bertha! (*Sees Harold*) Were it not for the God I have offended and the devil I fear, I'd consign my shame to yonder river.

HAROLD

A befitting climax — anticlimax for a regal burlesque.

HENRY

How dare —

HAROLD

Dare? Confirmed habits! Hard to get rid of. You have not put off the old man yet.

HENRY

To me? From you, a buffoon?

HAROLD

Who wouldn't allow you to carry his pack — that is, if he had one.

HENRY

Have a care, I am your sovereign!

HAROLD

Franconia, you lie!

HENRY

Dog, mongrel, canaille — Oh, restraint, restraint! Will I never learn to curb my unruly temper?

HAROLD

No, for you have not the right disposition. Buffoon! Me? Be it so. And you? What chickens hatch from the nest you sat on? Look at me. I am one. Once I had fine feathers and aplenty to satisfy the most whimsical taste. Abundance weighted the festive board; but drunk, mad, delirious with the intoxication of self-esteem, the table was cast, kicked over, and the fruits laid waste — not by the official fool!

HENRY

Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa! Why do you seek to add to my misery?

HAROLD

Because it sired mine. My mirth has evaporated; I have no wit that is not mordant, no humor that is not dangerous.

HENRY

Calamity, calamity, all my —

HAROLD

Yestere'en, for food, I parted with my merry-andrew — sold it to a usurious Jew.

HENRY

(*Smiling weakly*) Of scant amusement —

HAROLD

But of much profit! He'll dispose of it to some relic-seeker to pass to other generations as belonging to the jester of the fourth Henry: A monarch who inherited a throne refulgent with the emprise of a line of kings from Ludwig, but who bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage. Dotard, dullard, out-on-you, your peccadilloes have made the bauble valuable!

HENRY

Say no more; spare me. At last, I think, I realize.

Enter FELIX *and* MILDRED, *R.*

FELIX

Ho, ho, my philosopher and sage, I'm delighted —

HAROLD

To behold so much beauty?

MILDRED

Dear Harold, your appearance does bespeak begrudging fortune.

HAROLD

The shrewish dame is not as niggardly as she seems, for she has given me the wealth of your smile.

FELIX

When parted you from our native land?

HAROLD

Thirty times has the sun risen and set. Heigh-o, there be many changes: Godfrey dead — killed by the young Nordheim while battling for his own castle; Conrad in a mad-house with Attila and heavenly hosts for comrades. It's a funny world, with its professional and unprofessional harlequins!

MILDRED

How goes the kingdom?

HAROLD

Dirge and tolling bell do not invite cheerfulness.

MILDRED

And it was once so gay.

HAROLD

Mourning's period draws to a close, and the dwelling is being swept for a new tenant.

HENRY

(*Interested*) Eh, what's that?

FELIX

It names?

HENRY

(*Apprehensively*) Nordheim?

HAROLD

Months eleven have come and gone since the Lords Spiritual and Temporal did name him ruler —

HENRY

(*Vindictively*) Judas!

HAROLD

— and he refused.

MILDRED

But now?

HAROLD

Otto made advocacy unto delay — twelve lunar months. Rodolph of Suabia administers. If at the end of the period Franconia be not reinstated, Rodolph accepts coronation.

HENRY

Twelve months! This is our last day.

MILDRED

(*As if with thought to plead for him*) I must within. (*Exits by archway*)

HAROLD

Adieu! I seek the pilgrim's palm branch. (*Exits L.*)

HENRY

(*To Felix*) Didst hear? The final day! If tomorrow find me unshriven . . . Once more will I beseech — Felix, recall the time I did entrust to you the care of Her Majesty to Mayence?

FELIX

I had hoped you had forgotten it.

HENRY

Had you forewarning!

FELIX

In all but detail.

HENRY

Was Godfrey false?

FELIX

Ah, we must say nothing of the dead but what is good!

HENRY

He alone was privy.

FELIX

Conspirators, like mummers in pantomime, should have no speech; nor is it well they be given to talk in sleep.

HENRY

Did — does Bertha know?

FELIX

She is without suspicion.

HENRY

(*Fervently*) Thank God! In this dreadful trial of mine, it is the one crime did accuse to the stunting of all others; and its appalling attendant was the fear — the dread — the persisting, reiterating question: does she know?

FELIX

I take my leave.

HENRY

Not before I speak my gratitude for what you have done for me.

FELIX

You waste words. Recall, if you can, a single instance when Mildred, Mary or myself ever addressed you a word that could be avoided. To us you were outside the pale — an outcast with no standing before God or man. When Her Majesty resolved not to abandon, to tread with you the wine-press of tribulation, we followed in the train to comfort and protect her — not you. (*Exits by archway*)

HENRY

(*Turns to guards*) Well, what think you now? Amusing, eh? Courtiers, servants, clowns deride! The Queen is loved and is worshiped with privation, not words.

Enter HAROLD, *L.*, *carrying* BERTHA *in his arms.*

HAROLD

Out of the way!

HENRY

(*Frightened*) The Queen! What has happened?

HAROLD

Swoon — found her in snow bank.

HENRY

What are you going to do with her?

HAROLD

Take her where inexorable justice may, for once in its life, behold the apotheosis of love. (*Exits carrying her by archway. Henry tries to follow but is repulsed*)

HENRY

Let me — she's my wife — Oh, let me follow.

Enter OTTO, *R.*

OTTO

Henry!

HENRY

So you too have come with smug piety to gloat over the fallen?

OTTO

I have come to attend the marriage of my son.

HENRY

(*Bitterly*) Which I postponed! That was my greatest blunder.

OTTO

It was among the least of them.

HENRY

(*Hopefully*) Otto, will you intercede for me?

OTTO

Such was my intention, if I found you had taken to heart the lesson.

HENRY

I have; indeed, I have. Beseech Gregory to be merciful. Once I struck you on the face; now (*kneels*) see, on my knees, I abjectly admit my wrong and crave your pardon.

OTTO

To your feet! I have long since forgiven it.

HENRY

You have influence with the Pope of surpassing efficacy. Use it like a dear friend. I'll remember it to your advantage always. Oh, Otto, you do not know what it is to be a blasted oak in a forest of exquisite verdure, shunned by all, pitied by none, bending before hurricanes that rend and tear and threaten annihilation, shrinking from thunders that proclaim God and vengeance, hiding in caverns with thoughts more deadly than a serpent's bite, nights passed in listening to the jeering derision of demons — Oh, God, it will kill me — kill me! (*Drops his*

head to his knees — he is in a kneeling-sitting posture; looks up slyly to see if he has made an impression and, finding he has, smiles)

OTTO

May He pity you. I'll use my best endeavors. (*Exits by archway*)

HENRY

(*Rises. Sneeringly*) He, he! (*Soberly*) He is a noble man and yet — God forgive me! I can't help it — in my innermost heart and soul I know — pardon me Heaven, pardon me, I am as I was made; do not blame me too much — but I hate him —

DOLMINO *enters and stands in archway.*

Hate — hate —

DOLMINO

Who?

HENRY

(*Startled*) Ah! (*Recovers*) Sin, my Lord Cardinal, sin!

DOLMINO

Death bed repentance!

HENRY

(*With dignity*) I must see the pontiff; I want absolution for my sins.

DOLMINO

You'll find a priest down in the village.

HENRY

I am an interdict. None but Gregory can remove the ban.

DOLMINO

So, you have been pursuing a course in theology? What doctor, or doctors, do you most favor?

HENRY

Gregory is first the priest, and from the priest I demand the penitent's right.

DOLMINO

Oh, go — (*As if to make a rude answer but thinks better of it. Puzzled*) But, I will see. Do you abdicate your throne and surrender your sceptre into His Holiness' hands to dispose of as he sees fit?

HENRY

(*After momentary hesitation*) Yes, I do.

DOLMINO

I'll return shortly. (*Exits*)

BERTHA *comes running out archway as Dolmino retires.*

BERTHA

(*Joyously*) He relents, Henry, he relents! Gregory relents!

HENRY

(*Gathers her into his arms*) I care not what he does. Something higher, purer, nobler than Gregory has tri-

umphed. The tempest in my heart is stilled. (*Draws her closer*) The volcanic fires of passion are dead. My eyes are opened. The gift I so long contemptuously rejected, because I was not great enough to esteem it, the ineffable love of a woman has won! (*Passionately kissing her*) Come what may, I have you, my own, my adored wife, Bertha!

OPEN UP TO

SCENE 2. CHATEAU OF CANOSSA. Interior. A room medieval in architecture and fittings. Large arch entrance — the only entrance used — at R. C. On an angle at the left upper corner is a large doorway — two heavy doors which, when opened, disclose a banquet hall lighted and with tables set. Against the left wall is an improvised throne for Gregory.

To wedding music, enter RAIMOND *and* MILDRED, *followed immediately by* GREGORY. *After him comes* OTTO, FELIX, HERMANN, ATTENDANTS, *male and female, lay and cleric.*

GREGORY

(*In a friendly and fatherly manner places a hand on the shoulders of Raimond and Mildred*) I add my congratulations to the Church's blessing, and my prayers will ever remember you. You have suffered much and emerged unscathed — indeed, you are the better for it. Great altitudes are reached by trial and perseverance. May your future be always as you now behold it through tranquil and hopeful eyes; and when your argosies are finally helmed for the enchanted shore of immortality, may the benediction of the Almighty be with you.

RAIMOND

We can, from our hearts, but thank you.

MILDRED

In our humble orisons you will never be forgotten.

GREGORY

Otherwise, give me little thought. It might disturb your dreams. It is said, and my critics speak sagely, that I am cold, heartless, pitiless — (*Sighs*) Ah, well, compassionate me as an old man, beaten but not broken — buffeted by mighty waves that sweep up from deep spaces — who, with faith in Divine goodness, strives — ever — to achieve what's best. (*To Felix, who is down R.*) How fares it with you, my gay cavalier? Have you no weakness for the gentler sex?

FELIX

Nor admiration for the celibate's cloister. "You have not the holy indications," said Abbot Anselm. He ought to know for he tutored me.

GREGORY

Then I'll wed you to the sword. There is much to do in the East. You shall head a company of my crusaders.

FELIX

I have a nature responsive to the siren appeal of adventure.

Enter DOLMINO.

DOLMINO

Your Holiness, Henry surrenders his sceptre, crown and sovereignty into your hands.

GREGORY

We have already directed that he be admitted. (*He moves about and chats with Otto and others in a very human way*)

Enter BERTHA, *comes down. Dolmino retires.*

BERTHA

(*To Felix*) Where is Mary?

FELIX

Deserted.

BERTHA

What do you mean?

FELIX

The ceremony not quite complete — without waiting to kiss the bride — she stole out of a side entrance and started for a convent — no easy one, I ween — in which to inter her loveliness.

BERTHA

(*Surprised*) Is this true?

FELIX

What other cot so fit for a stainless dove?

BERTHA

Had you no persuasion to stop her?

FELIX

None.

BERTHA

Did you try?

FELIX

No, though she left my heart like a lonely heron beating up against night winds.

HERMANN

Egregious blunderers! Worse, far worse than I am.

FELIX

I to the Holy Land to give battle to the Saracen. Glorious! To plant a banner on the walls of Jerusalem, even if the fatal shaft smite you in the act!

GREGORY

Never fear. There is a certain class in which Providence has an especial benign interest.

FELIX

But, Holiness, I have attained the age of reason and I abominate the super-distillation of the grape.

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD

If I missed the nuptials, perhaps I am not too late for the epithalamium?

GREGORY

Who is this ragimuff — uninvited guest?

HAROLD

A minstrel without a lyre; a troubadour without a song.

BERTHA

'Tis Harold our jester. He who carried me in his arms into your presence.

GREGORY

I did not then carefully observe him. Because he has loved much much shall be forgiven him. You *are* invited.

HAROLD

(*Putting his hand on stomach*) More than my heart is grateful for that.

DOLMINO

(*Standing at door*) The Franconian seeks admission.

GREGORY

Let him enter. (*Goes and sits on throne*)

Enter HENRY.

HENRY

(*Not cringing but calmly resigned, goes and kneels before Gregory*) My haughty spirit is broken — subdued. I do not sue, do not urge; I am in your hands; I abide your decision.

GREGORY

Peace be to you! "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Arise. (*Henry*

stands) Take back your crown and sceptre, return to your kingdom, be a lamp unto your people, a servant to your subjects, and your reign will be fragrant.

The banquet hall doors are thrown open and a functionary announces in a loud voice: "The banquet is served!" All stand and, except Henry, turn and face the banquet hall.

HENRY

(*Down C.*) Banquet! Ha, ha, ha! (*Laughs sardonically*) Not mine; mine awaits the fulness of time and opportunity!

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